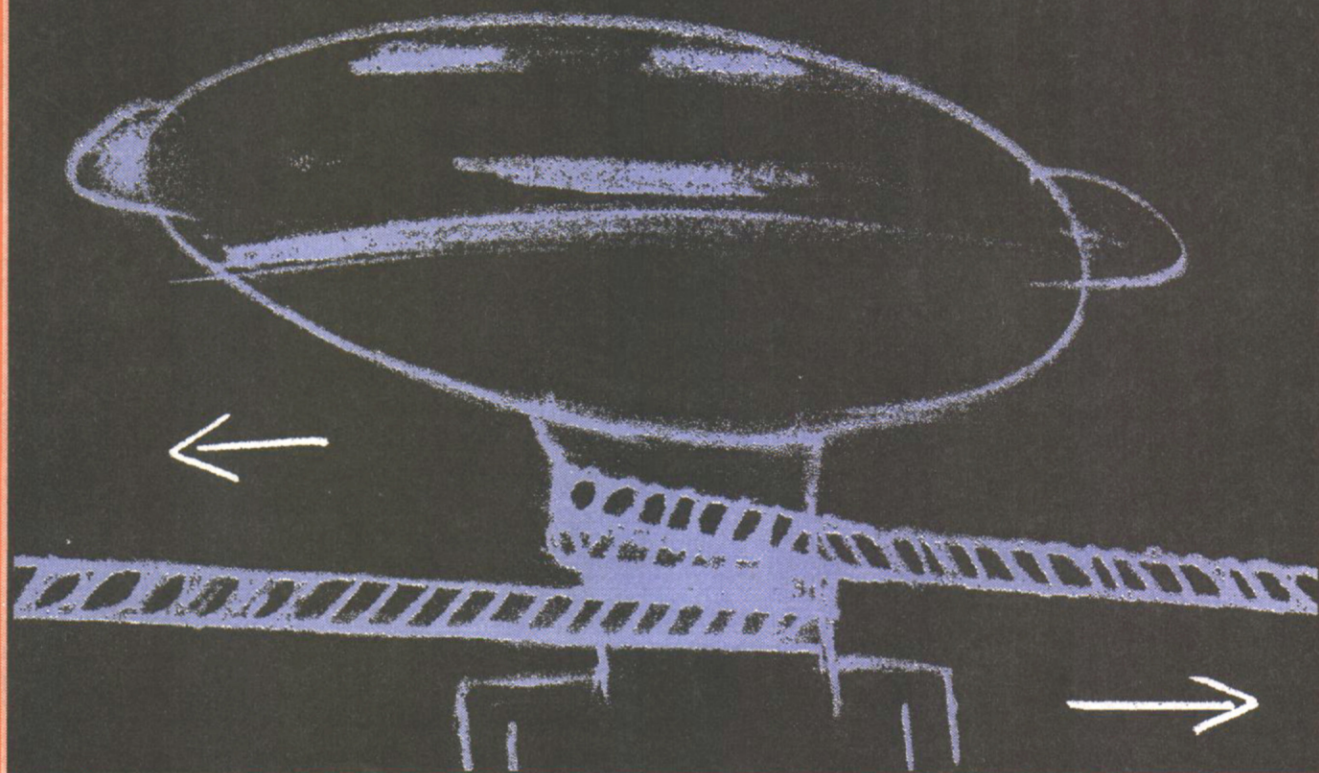


Michael Moore talks trash about the left

October 14-27, 1996

IN THESE TIMES

TORTURE 101



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The whole story on the
School of the Americas'
notorious curriculum

Lisa Haugaard reports

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EDITORIAL

LOOKING BEYOND NOVEMBER

Bob Dole and Bill Clinton have been busily trying to one-up each other by talking about matters that have little or nothing to do with the function of the federal government. Their favorite issues are crime, education and the family. Yet there's little that government on the national level can do about such things, and neither candidate has offered any concrete proposals. Dole, of course, does—or did—talk about taxes, but he has never addressed how a cut in taxes would affect government spending, much less social policy. What he would eliminate or reduce in order to accommodate the tax cut remains a mystery to the general public, fudged by the claim that when taxes are cut, revenues will increase—a dubious proposition at best. Meanwhile, Clinton has become Dr. Feelgood. Ignoring all the meaningful issues, he has taken credit for everything his pollsters tell him it's safe to say. Since he's coasting to victory, why not?

Yet this year, as in past presidential elections, there is a glaring discrepancy between the picture the major candidates paint of our nation and the reality that pollsters find when they conduct in-depth surveys. Consider the latest survey by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press. Although polling is, to say the least, an inexact science, the results are still suggestive. While Clinton talks about the welfare bill as a great, if flawed, opportunity for the poor, the Pew poll found that 60 percent of Democrats and a plurality of independents believe the government should do more, not less, to help the poor and needy. Republicans, of course, don't share this view. Almost two-thirds of them think we can't afford to do more, a position that Clinton has latched on to.

Similarly, Clinton signed the \$365 billion military spending bill—which authorized spending \$11 billion more than he asked for—although two-thirds of both Democrats and independents believe that military strength is not the best

way to ensure peace. Even Republicans are split on this issue. But the White House is afraid to look weak on militarism in an election year.

On some issues, voters of all persuasions are way ahead of their presidential nominees. By a margin of almost 4-to-1, they believe that the government “should do whatever it takes” to protect the environment, and two-thirds of Democrats and independents believe that stricter environmental regulations would be worth the cost. You'd never guess this by listening to Dole or Clinton.

Finally, there is corporate power and profit, the bottom-line, bread-and-butter issue for political candidates who spend much of every day begging from the wealthy. Their mantra is that the more money corporations make, the more prosperous we are as a nation. And the corollary of this is that to make money, corporations must be regulated lightly, if at all. Not only is this view never challenged, except by the likes of Pat Buchanan, but it is trumpeted as a secular religion. And yet, the Pew researchers found—as other studies have found by similar margins, over and over again—that a large majority of Republicans, Democrats and independents believe that too much power is concentrated in the hands of a few large companies. Among Democrats the margin is 6-to-1, and even among Republicans it is better than 2-to-1.

A new poll suggests that on many issues, the American public is far ahead of the politicians of both parties.

The researchers also found that a substantial majority of Democrats and independents believe that corporations make too much profit.

The astounding thing about these findings is that they fly in the face not only of the near-universal rhetoric of our political leaders, but also of the “objective” reporting of our commercial media. The American people, it seems, learn more from their own experiences and observations than from their

leaders and the major sources of news and opinion. And what they learn, and the attitudes they express, provides a solid basis for a popular alternative politics—dare we say it, a politics of the left. The time for such a politics to emerge is long overdue. It couldn't happen this year because the task at hand has been the destruction of the so-called Republican revolution. But assuming that that will be accomplished with a Clinton landslide, there's work for us to do starting in November. ◀

IN THESE TIMES

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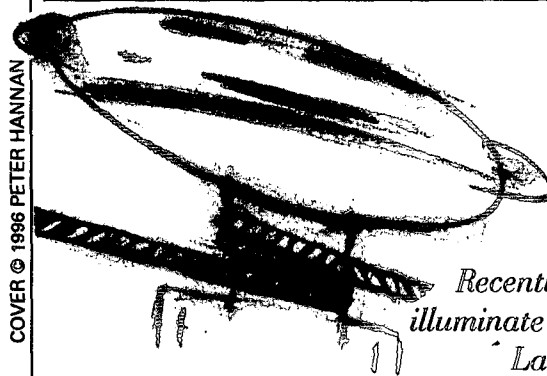
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Tilting at windmills

Starved for funds, Victor Morales' grass-roots challenge to Phil Gramm founders.

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LETTERS

Seal 'em off

David Madison's article "Nuclear wastrels" (September 16) succeeds in showing how our government operates as an agent of big business, as well as how it wastes taxpayers' money.

But Madison neglects to point out that there is no way to clean up radioactive waste. It may, however, be possible to clean up a radioactive site. So we have many people paid very high wages to move radioactive waste and contaminated materials from one location to another, at great risk to the health of all life along the transport route. And after it has been moved, what has been accomplished, aside from the contamination of another area? It's hard to imagine a more useless way to spend time, money and resources—though buying weapons with money we don't have to fight enemies that don't exist certainly comes close.

Wouldn't it be cheaper and safer to

seal off contaminated areas such as Hanford and build a new Hanford? Or better yet, we could decide we don't need a Hanford.

Karl I. Hennum
Seattle

Popular power

Joel Bleifuss' "Power plays" (August 19) provided much-needed coverage of an issue that has been largely overlooked by the media and the general public. This state of affairs must change quickly if consumers are to have any say in shaping the details of deregulation that are now being worked out by Congress, state legislatures and utility commissions. Once a compromise among the various interests involved has been reached, it may be very difficult to alter the outcome.

In particular, the various plans put forward so far by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission and the California Public Utilities Commission

leave unanswered critical questions of market power and the potential for predatory pricing. If those issues are not resolved fairly, it is unlikely that rates will fall for any but the largest users with substantial bargaining power. Bleifuss' suggestion that more publicly owned utilities be established is a good one, but some of the deregulatory proposals now on the table could seriously undermine the viability of that option. Utility owners are well aware that some of the deregulatory pressures now affecting the industry tend to encourage the formation of new municipal utilities, and they are promoting restrictions to make this difficult, if not impossible. The deregulatory process will also have profound consequences for existing municipal utilities, some of which have investment problems of their own, even those that have largely avoided investment in overpriced nuclear plants.

Lisa G. Dowden
Washington, D.C.

FDA vs. Big Tobacco

In "Gotta match?" (August 5), Mike Males argues that portraying tobacco as a forbidden adult activity—which tobacco companies have done for years—makes smoking even more attractive to young people. INFACT agrees and we have condemned Philip Morris' thinly veiled attempts to do just that with its "Action Against Access" program.

SYLVIA

by Nicole Hollander



However, we think Males is wrong to characterize the proposed FDA regulations of tobacco as a "scattershot" approach that poses no threat to the industry. While these proposals do not go as far as the demands INFAC^T issued to the industry in 1994, they contain important restrictions on tobacco advertising and promotion. Teens are actually three times more susceptible to these ads than adults. The tobacco industry spends \$6 billion a year in advertising and promotion, not to influence brand choice, as Males and the tobacco industry claim, but to hook the next generation of customers. As tobacco advertising has increased, so has teen smoking.

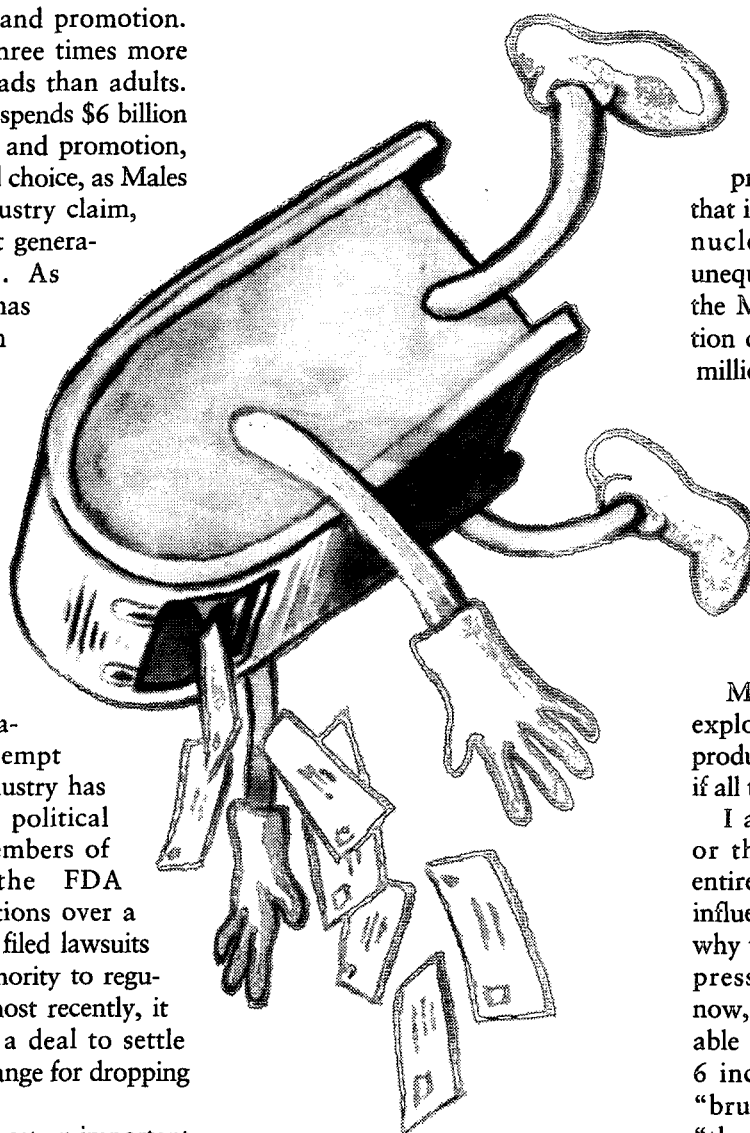
If restricting advertising that targets young people merely played into the hands of the tobacco giants, they would not be fighting so hard to block it. Philip Morris proposed its own legislation in May to pre-empt FDA action. The industry has made record-setting political contributions to members of Congress since the FDA announced its intentions over a year ago. It has also filed lawsuits challenging FDA authority to regulate tobacco. And, most recently, it attempted to strike a deal to settle state lawsuits in exchange for dropping FDA regulations.

The FDA rules can set an important global standard for expanded pressure on tobacco companies. We must also keep up the pressure to rein in corporate power at home. The tobacco industry is a prime example of undue corporate influence in our political process. It earned Philip Morris and RJR Nabisco a place in INFAC^T's 1996 Hall of Shame (see "In Short," May 27).

For more information on INFAC^T's campaigns and a free "Big Business Out

of Congress" bumper sticker, write to 256 Hanover St., Boston, MA 02113 or call (617) 742-4583.

Lucinda Wykle-Rosenberg
Communications Director, INFAC^T
Boston



False alarm

Deidre McFadyen's "A brush with nuclear disaster" (see "In Short," September 16) leaves the impression that a Mk 6 nuclear bomb with exposed sheared detonators might have gone full nuclear in a fire in England in 1956, resulting in a nuclear disaster. As stated in the article, a bomb-dispos-

al officer said it was a miracle that one Mk 6 didn't go. But what is meant by "go" is not defined. If the disposal officer was referring to the non-nuclear high explosive in the Mk 6, then he possibly had a point. However, if he meant that the Mk 6 might have gone nuclear, he was wrong.

In my 40 years of experience working with nearly every nuclear weapon design ever built, one of my assignments was to assess the premature probability of nuclear weapons—that is, the chances of any unintended nuclear detonation. I can state unequivocally that the probability of the Mk 6 going nuclear in the situation described was less than one in a million.

There are several reasons why that Mk 6 could not have caused a nuclear explosion. The first is that the nuclear material in Mk 6 bombs was not assembled until deployed on a strike mission. Second, simultaneous ignition of all detonators in the Mk 6 was required for a nuclear explosion. And third, fire could not produce the simultaneity required even if all the detonators were present.

I am not defending the Pentagon or the military. My studies were entirely independent of any external influence. However, I can understand why the Mk 6 incident would be suppressed in those days, when even now, with so much information available about nuclear weapons, the Mk 6 incident is falsely reported as a "brush with nuclear disaster" and "the U.S. government's scandalous initial cover-up."

Joseph Muench
Placitas, N.M.

Editor's note: Please try to keep letters under 250 words in length. Otherwise we may have to make drastic cuts, which may change what you wished to say. Also, if possible, please type and double-space letters—or at least write clearly and with wide margins.

IN SHORT

of and cut off from their capital. Their fears are well-founded. In March of 1993, Israel instituted a permanent closure of Jerusalem. Since that time, all West Bank residents attempting to enter Jerusalem must pass through military checkpoints, and only those with the proper permits—which are difficult, and often impossible, to obtain—are allowed through. This has proved devastating for Palestinian commerce in the city, and has resulted in the separation of numerous families as many of those without official Jerusalem residency have been denied “family reunification” requests.

Demolition of Palestinian property in the Jerusalem area has added to these fears. In a dramatic instance in August, a bulldozer was hoisted by crane over the walls of the Old City and used to demolish a four-year-old building in the Muslim

quarter intended for handicapped services. The building did not have the requisite, but, again, almost impossible to obtain, Israeli permits.

Over the past months, isolated occurrences throughout the territories gave a hint of things to come: On July 19, for example, 200 Palestinians protested the seizure and fencing off of 100 acres of agricultural land by set-



REAPING WHAT YOU SOW

Why such surprise over the outbreak of violence in the Occupied Territories? For anyone who has paid attention as the events of the peace process unfolded, the only question was “when?” Since the signing of the Oslo Agreements in September 1993, Israel has confiscated 72,500 acres of Palestinian land, demolished 109 houses, uprooted 32,000 trees, arrested,

tortured and “administratively detained” hundreds of Palestinians, and paved more than 124 miles of settler bypass roads through Palestinian land. There is only so much a people can take.

It is significant that the event that sparked the unrest took place in Jerusalem, for Palestinians are deeply afraid that they are being pushed out

Voting your portfolio

WHAT'S GOOD FOR BOB DOLE IS GOOD FOR PINKERTON—AND BAD FOR AMERICA. THAT'S ONE WAY TO READ THE conventional wisdom on Wall Street concerning November's presidential election. Handicapping the race for the *Wall Street Journal*, John Dorfman observed that a Dole victory would boost “crime-fighting stocks, defense stocks and concerns that can take over activities previously done by government.” Experts believe, he explained, that “Dole would cut welfare spending,” which would “result in an increase in crime and violence.” That would mean more business for America's law-and-order industry, including such private security firms as Pinkerton and Wackenhut. A Dole win also means defense contractors such as Hughes Electronics and Lockheed Martin are “likely to do well,” Dorfman added. A Clinton victory, on the other hand, bodes well for companies specializing in education and job training, according to Wall Street analysts. The same can't be said for health care stocks, which will suffer, in Dorfman's view, should re-election embolden Clinton to make “another try at some nationalized health care program.” Would we be so lucky? —Joel Bleifuss

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APPALLO-O-METER

THE IN THESE TIMES INDEX OF INDECENCIES



By **David Futrelle**

Double Dealey 7.8

If you've ever wondered what it would be like to star in your very own Zapruder film, Dallas entrepreneur Paul Crute has got a deal for you. For only \$25, you can take a ride in a vintage open-top limo down the route of John F. Kennedy's ill-fated motorcade, accompanied by recorded sounds recreating the original ride.

Tacky? No. "I view it as history, and there's nothing tasteless or tacky about history," Crute told the Associated Press. Magic bullets, umbrella men and second gunmen presumably cost extra.

Deep thoughts 4.2

Convicted rapist and champion boxer Mike Tyson is now expressing some remorse for his past actions—specifically, for the time in prison he

spent reading serious literature. "When I was in prison I was wrapped up in all those deep books," he recently complained. "That Tolstoy crap. People shouldn't read that stuff."



Moments of harmony 8.7

Italian wife-beaters are getting a second chance, due to a new ruling from Italy's highest court. As the *Chicago Sun-Times* recently reported, the court ruled that a husband couldn't be charged with a crime because he was only a part-time beater. His "occasional episodes" of violence were "inter-

spersed with moments of harmony between the couple." One wonders if a similar protection will extend to murderers whose occasional episodes of murder are interspersed with weeks and months that are completely murder-free.

Duped! 6.6

Several weeks back, newspapers around the world (and a certain *In These Times* column) reported that singer Mariah Carey had told a reporter she wanted to be skinny like "starving kids all over the world ... but not with all those flies and death and stuff." It turns out the quote was a, er, hoax engineered by the online magazine *Cupcake*. At least that's what we read in *Newsweek*, and we're pretty sure they're not making it up.

Appallo-O-Meter

1. Martha Stewart Living Dead
2. Yeltsin-healthy
3. Dole-orous
4. Below the Beltway
5. PRI-posterous
6. Ralph Reed-iculous
7. Netan-yahooish
8. Morris Dicked
9. Taliban terrible
10. Unabombastic

Rabin, may he rest in peace, and Shimon Peres, who during the last four years raised the number of Jews in Judea and Samaria by 40 percent. ... We should also praise the Israeli left, which didn't utter a word about this for four years, and the American government, which knew but didn't care. And also we should give thanks to the Palestinian Authority, which saw that we were building but did not permit this to disrupt the peace process."

Meridor goes on to promise that Likud will continue and amplify these policies, and there is little indication that Washington will withdraw its tacit support of them. If nothing in this equation changes, we can be sure of many more deadly clashes like those in late September.

—Stephen Siegel

CLINTON AND ABORTION

As Bill Clinton partied down at his inaugural bash in 1993, pro-choice advocates breathed a collective sigh of relief: finally, a chance to fight back after 12 years of defending abortion from attack. But after four years of our long-awaited Democratic president, the most one can say about abortion rights is that the Reagan-Bush status quo has been maintained. Abortion may be formally legal, but for many women it's totally inaccessible: Eighty-four percent of counties in the United States don't have even one abortion provider, and hundreds of thousands of poor women are unable to pay for an abortion.

The first weeks of the Clinton administration gave pro-choice Democrats good reason to be elated. In his first two days on the job, Clinton issued a rapid-fire succession of executive orders overturning various restrictive abortion policies. He rescinded the "gag rule" prohibiting doctors in federally funded clinics from discussing abortion with their patients, and lifted the ban on abortion in overseas military hospitals, though the woman still had to pay out of her own pocket. During Clinton's

tlers of Shilo and Shvut Rachel in the West Bank. Other protests have erupted around the construction of bypass roads linking Jewish settlements, which entails the confiscation of large tracts of Palestinian land.

The construction of settlements, perhaps the most inflammatory Israeli policy, has continued at a rapid pace. A common myth has it that settlement construction was frozen by the Labor government. In fact, Labor had a very

aggressive settlement policy, but this went largely unreported and uncriticized. The silence of critics of the Israeli government—in Israel, in Palestine and in the United States—allowed it a free hand in the Occupied Territories, and they therefore share responsibility for the inevitable outcome.

The current (Likud) minister of finance, Dan Meridor, suggested as much in a recent interview: "In this regard we have to praise Yitzhak

first year in office, congressional Democrats were able to reverse a prohibition on covering the abortions of federal employees with health insurance provided by the government.

Yet overall, Clinton's record seems rather weak, especially considering the much stronger measures that were being contemplated in Congress at the time. In 1993, House Democrats proposed the Freedom of Choice Act, which would have codified *Roe vs. Wade* as a federal statute, preventing any further erosion of abortion rights on a state-by-state basis and removing *Roe* from the reaches of a conservative Supreme Court. But the Freedom of Choice Act sputtered out in committee. Clinton made no effort to rally support among recalcitrant members of Congress; on the campaign trail he pledged to sign the bill, but once in office he barely mentioned it publicly.

More significant was Clinton's lukewarm position on the 1976 Hyde Amendment, which prohibits the use of federal Medicaid dollars to cover the abortions of poor women, except if the woman's life is in danger. Congressional Democrats made a serious push in 1993 to reverse the Hyde Amendment, but, lacking strong support from the Clinton administration, they were unable to do more than extend Medicaid coverage to abortions in the case of rape or incest. No one from the administration was sent to testify before the House Appropria-

tions Committee on abortion funding. What's more, in a move that outraged pro-choice organizations, Clinton advocated classifying abortion as an "optional" procedure, meaning that while states would be reimbursed for 50 percent of the costs of funding abortion if they chose to do so, they would not be penalized if they chose not to fund abortions. So even if the bill had passed, the number of states funding abortion probably would not have increased.

After the 1994 elections, freshmen Republicans promptly set about ending coverage of abortions for federal employees and reinstating the ban on abortion in overseas military hospitals, attaching both measures to appropriations bills. Even though anti-abortion Republicans didn't have enough votes to override a presidential veto, Clinton signed both bills in early 1996, anti-abortion riders and all. He did apologize, of course.

"Clinton may not have been a staunch advocate of everything the pro-choice community could want, but he's the best we can hope for," says Terry Sol-lum of the Alan Guttmacher Institute, a pro-choice think tank. Attitudes like

this—widespread among pro-choice organizations—are a main reason that Clinton has been able to get away with doing relatively little to expand abortion rights, despite their importance to so many of his supporters. Of course, Clinton has made a real effort to protect late-term abortions, and he's pledged not to appoint pro-life judges to the Supreme Court (although he's appointed at least one anti-choice jurist to a federal appeals court in Wyoming). But while *Roe vs. Wade* will be safe under another Clinton administration, we're unlikely to see any expansion of access—especially for poor women—and there's no reason to believe that restrictions at the state level won't continue to spread. Maybe Clinton wants to keep abortion safe and legal, but he also seems to be doing his part to make sure it's rare.

—Kim Phillips

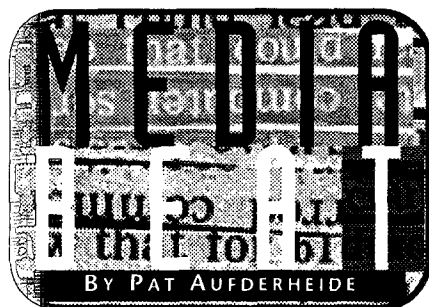
Would you like fries with your wiretap?

IN BRITAIN, THE MCDONALD'S CORP.'S LIBEL SUIT AGAINST

Helen Steel and Dave Morris has entered its third year. At issue are pamphlets the two unemployed anarchists distributed accusing McDonald's of destroying rainforests, exploiting child labor and selling unhealthy food. In recent testimony, agents formerly employed by McDonald's have provided details about the burger behemoth's efforts to collect information on London Greenpeace, the group that put out the pamphlet. (London Greenpeace is not affiliated with Greenpeace International.) The company now admits that for several months, beginning in October 1989, it deployed seven McSpies, who, according to court testimony, broke into London Greenpeace offices, stole letters and compiled dossiers that included the photos and addresses of all group members. One McSpy, Roy Pocklington, testified that he put together a package of baby clothes for the son of libel defendant Dave Morris "in an attempt to discover Mr. Morris' address." Another infiltrator, Frances Tiller, expressed remorse. "I felt very uncomfortable doing that particular job," she said. "I did not like the deception, prying on people and interfering in their lives. I did not think there was anything wrong with what the group was doing. I believe people are entitled to their views." —J.B.



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A broader spectrum

Listeners' and viewers' rights come before corporate rights: That's the verdict from a three-judge panel in the District of Columbia Circuit of the U.S. Court of Appeals in *Time Warner vs. FCC*. The decision has far-reaching consequences because it creates virtual space for non-profit activities in tomorrow's media.

The judges were ruling on whether or not providers of direct broadcast satellite TV service, or DBS (which comes to you via a pizza box-sized satellite receiving dish), have to make room for non-commercial and educational programs. A 1992 law had reserved 4 to 7 percent of the space on any DBS service for such programs. But a lower court decided in 1993 that the set-aside told DBS operators what to program, and so violated their First Amendment rights.

The appeals court judges argued, however, that new technologies hadn't changed the fact that there were still more people who wanted to use a public resource—broadcast spectrum—than could do so. Even though DBS operators carry perhaps hundreds of channels, the court ruled, they control which channels will be carried. Therefore, they must leave at least a little space on their system for expression that is not profit-motivated.

Setting aside space doesn't guarantee that anyone will make good use of it. But without a set-aside, no one would even get to try. Public radio and public TV only came into existence because government reserved spectrum for non-commercial broadcasting. Even then, neither was able to offer a viable alternative to commercial broadcasters until 1967, when the government put in some money and created a national organization. More recently, of

course, public broadcasting has been put on a starvation diet and made to beg from corporations and individuals, hobbling the largest national experiment so far in public electronic media.

The action now shifts to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), which will have to regulate the terms of the set-aside (exactly how much? who qualifies? how much can they qualify for?). The FCC will begin a process, or docket, open to anyone who wants to write or e-mail comments. The more potential users there are—such as labor unions, educational, community and religious organizations—the more space the FCC is likely to clear out on the viewing menu.

Synergy in action

Will the lead of Disney/ABC's weekly sitcom *Ellen* come out as a lesbian? Rupert Murdoch's News Corp. has been busily stirring up rumors, with hints dropped in the info-empire's *TV Guide*, the *New York Post* and *Fox News*

Sunday on the Fox News Network. This deployment of conglomerate synergy has fueled speculation about Rupert's agenda—is it political, financial, or both? Religious conservatives, including Pat Robertson (interviewed on Fox's news show), warn they might stage a protest or boycott of Disney, one of Rupert's mega-rivals.

Scandal sheets

Magazines have been the advance guard in the emerging media universe, characterized by ever more highly defined niche markets. The latest magazine to search out a new market niche is *Divorce*, pitched to the million-plus folks who break the knot each year. Publisher Dan Couvrette—who earlier scored with *Wedding Bells*, a magazine for the bridal market—has found attorneys, real estate brokers, therapists and hair-replacement specialists eager to advertise in his new venture. Can the launch of *Deadbeat Dads' Digest* be far behind?

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TOMORROW'S NEWS TONIGHT

By Steve Brodner



As predicted, Dole finds himself outmatched in debates.

A SWEET DEAL FOR THE SUGAR INDUSTRY

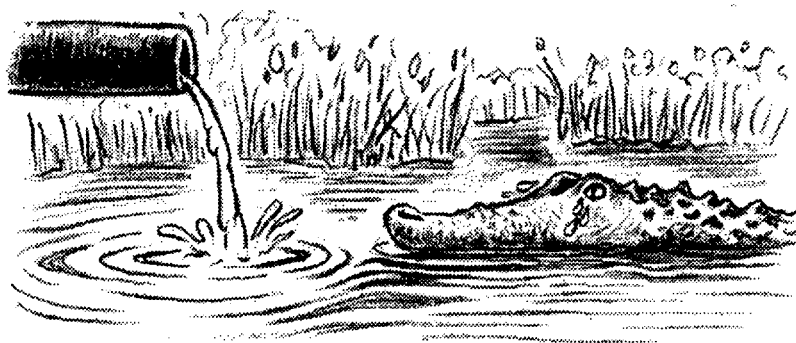
The Everglades are dying. Half of the original 4,000 square-mile ecosystem is most likely gone forever, and another 3.2 acres disappear every day. While responsibility is difficult to prove in many man-made environmental disasters, in this case it is clear who's to blame. Sugar production, encouraged by bad public policy, is the primary culprit. Phosphorus-laden runoff from the sugarcane fields upsets the delicate nutrient balance in the Everglades and encourages the growth of non-native plants, while water is diverted to the sugar fields on a massive scale. On November 5, Florida voters will get their chance to reverse those policies. If they approve the "Save Our Everglades" referendum, what's left of this spectacular ecosystem may at last get a chance to recover.

The referendum consists of three amendments to the state constitution—Amendments 4, 5 and 6. Amendment 4 calls for a penny a pound fee on raw sugar. This fee would provide \$900 million over 25 years to clean and restore the Everglades. Amendment 5 specifies that industries that pollute in Florida are financially responsible for the cost of that pollution. If it passes, it will be the first time that any American state constitution holds polluters financially responsible for their actions. Amendment 6 will create the Everglades Trust Fund to guarantee that the funds earmarked for Everglades restoration will be spent on that project.

The Save Our Everglades Committee (SOEC), a grass-roots coalition responsible for placing the initiatives on the ballot, tried to get the issue on the 1994 ballot but was challenged in court by the sugar industry and lost. The sugar lobby is vigorously fighting the referendum again this year. Since last November, the industry has spent more than \$25 million on television ads denouncing the referendum. The ads compare the proposed sugar fee to

Ralph Reed's multiplication problems

RALPH REED MAY NOT BE ABLE TO MULTIPLY LOAVES AND FISHES, BUT HE DOES have a knack for creating Christian Coalition members out of thin air. The "c.c. watch" Electronic News Service, which tracks the various enterprises of Pat Robertson, reports that in January 1995 the Christian Coalition claimed to have 1.5 million members, which by September of the same year had risen to 1.7 million. This year, the numbers continue their galloping increase. On August 9, Reed told Larry King that the coalition had 1.8 million members. Then, on August 16, Reed boasted to MSNBC's John Hockenberry that the group was 2 million strong. In seven days, the Christian Coalition army had swelled by 200,000 souls. Can this be? According to IRS documents, the group's reported revenues were \$2 million less in 1995 than 1994, dropping from \$22 million to \$19.7 million. Similarly, the group's magazine, *Christian American*, saw its circulation fall from 415,000 in 1994 to 354,000 in 1995. Those figures seem to indicate that the Christian Coalition is shrinking, not growing. God works in mysterious ways. —J.B.



the state lottery, alleging that "the politicians" won't spend the revenue on the Everglades, despite the ironclad language of the amendments.

The truth is that politicians in Tallahassee and Washington have long enjoyed lavish political contributions from the sugar interests. The Center for Responsive Politics reports that between 1979 and 1994, the sugar lobby donated almost \$12 million to politicians in both major parties. Between 1985 and 1990, sugar PACs gave more than \$660,000 to sitting members of the House Agriculture Committee. Their largesse has paid off: In the last five decades, the Florida sugar industry—85 percent of which is controlled by two corporations, U.S. Sugar and Flo-Sun—has pocketed nearly \$5 billion in government subsidies via federal price-support programs.

The bill for this government largesse is paid mainly by American consumers, who must buy sugar at twice the going

international price. And thanks to the voracious demands of the sugar industry, South Florida now faces a serious shortage of fresh water. Not surprisingly, the industry has become increasingly unpopular among Florida voters, and SOEC leaders are confident the referendum will pass. In a recent independent poll, 60 percent backed the referendum. But don't count the sugar barons out yet. They're bankrolling another initiative on this November's ballot, which would require any constitutionally mandated tax or fee program to garner two-thirds of the vote in order to become law. And because they claim that they first proposed the idea in 1994, they argue that it should apply retroactively to the Save Our Everglades referendum.

Those interested in following the campaign can find more information at <http://saveoureverglades.vcn.net>, or may call 1-888-Everglades.

—Gary Barlow

REDISTRICTED BUT NOT OUT

When she spoke out in the Georgia General Assembly against the Gulf War, many of Cynthia McKinney's fellow Democrats walked out. In Congress, McKinney made new enemies by taking on powerful Georgia business interests who pay rural black landowners a pittance to mine kaolin, a chalky white mineral used in making porcelain, textiles, paper and diarrhea medicine.

She won national acclaim in 1992 as the first black woman to be elected to Congress from Georgia, running around the Capitol in gold tennis shoes, but she made the hit list of not a few Georgia politicians, Democrat and Republican alike. This was to be the year they took their revenge. It may still be.

McKinney's opponent, first-time Republican candidate John Mitnick, portrays her as an extremist who coddles Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan. "She plays the race card," says Mitnick, a white Atlanta lawyer. "She plays the gender card. We don't need people out there pandering and dividing."

Mitnick's hopes rest on demographics. After twice being elected in a majority-black district, McKinney is running in a suburb of Atlanta that is two-thirds white. Federal judges in 1994 ruled her majority-black district unconstitutional, a product of illegal racial gerrymandering. The judges decided state lawmakers, hounded by the U.S. Justice Department, drew lines on a map for no other reason than to take in geographically disparate pockets of black Georgians. The U.S. Supreme Court narrowly agreed last year.

Federal judges charged with drawing a constitutional map took apart McKinney's district last year, depriving her of a couple of hundred thousand African-American constituents in parts of Augusta and Savannah, as well as rural eastern Georgia counties that never had a black representative.

They gave her a district made up of suburban Atlanta's racially mixed DeKalb County, including her base in the predominantly black southern half of the county, and a chunk of more Republican Gwinnett County.

The white Democrats who never cared much for McKinney licked their lips at the prospect of dumping her for a more moderate (read: white) Democrat. The new district, about a third black, seemed perfect for their plan: black enough to be reliably Democratic, yet white enough to keep an African-American from winning. Three white men took the challenge.

Together, they got little more than a third of the vote in July's congressional primary. Shocked, and perhaps a bit disappointed, these Democrats are now rallying around McKinney, more or less, in the face of Mitnick's challenge.

Republicans believe Mitnick, who is Jewish, may appeal to a number of

Democratic and independent voters, particularly among DeKalb County's sizable Jewish population. The National Republican Congressional Committee said it was going to send money Mitnick's way, but it has yet to do so.

McKinney barely acknowledges her opponent, although she has agreed to debate him in early October. McKinney, like so many other Democratic candidates, is instead targeting Newt Gingrich. "They want this district to be another notch in Newt's belt," she says.

—Mark Sherman

Sources

Stephen Siegel is a professor of mathematics at the University of Massachusetts and a founding member of the Jerusalem Action Committee of Chicago.

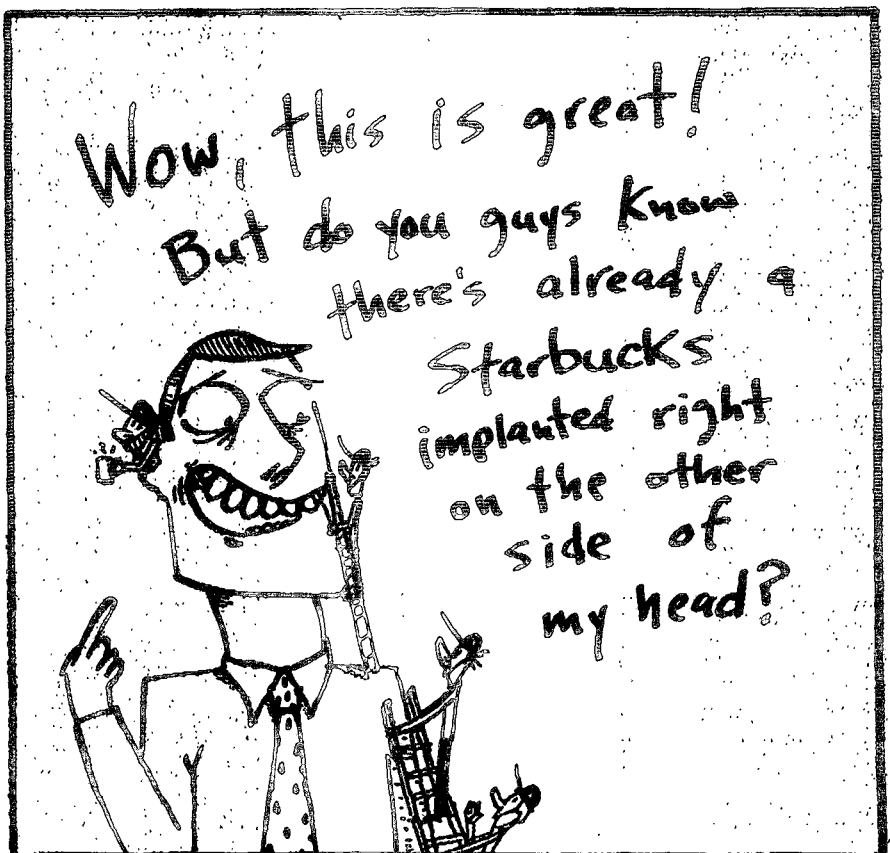
Kim Phillips is a freelance journalist based in Chicago.

Gary Barlow is a freelance journalist based in Tallahassee, Fla.

Mark Sherman is the state Capitol bureau chief for the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*.

THE ADVENTURES OF A HUGE MOUTH

By Peter Hannan



THE FIRST STONE

VOTING MATTERS

By Joel Bleifuss

Tinker Harvey, chair of the Democratic Party in DuPage County, Ill., is frustrated. After Chicago's Cook County, suburban DuPage has the highest number of Democrats in the state. Democratic candidates, whether they are running for governor, senator or president, must do well in DuPage if they hope to win in Illinois. But the county also boasts the highest number of Republican voters, and that has doomed DuPage Democrats like Harvey to vote and vote and never elect anybody to the Illinois legislature, not to mention the U.S. House of Representatives.

In 1980, Illinois got rid of multimember districts in which state legislators were elected through a system of quasi-proportional representation. "Since then we have never, ever had a single person from DuPage County in the state legislature," says Harvey. "That is a terrible thing. It's shocking to consider the number of people in this county that have had absolutely no representation of their own in the state legislature."

This year, it appears to Harvey that the tide could turn in the race for Illinois' 13th Congressional District, where a Democratic challenger stands a chance of unseating the Gingrich-affiliated incumbent. "If we just can get some more money, we're home," she says. "But there is not a lot of money around when you are running as an underdog." The PACs and the Democratic Party in Washington have not been willing to put their money on a DuPage Democrat, who according to conventional wisdom is bound to lose.

Whatever the outcome in DuPage County, two initiatives on the ballot elsewhere in the country this November could mean that hope is on the horizon for frustrated voters like Harvey. In Maine, voters have the opportunity to provide public financing for all state elections. Meanwhile, in San Francisco, voters will decide whether to elect their Board of Supervisors through a proportional representation system known as preference voting. As bellwether referenda, these two proposed reforms may be important first

steps in bringing elected representatives closer to the people.

Maine Voters for Clean Elections has sponsored a measure on the November ballot that reads: "Do you want Maine to adopt new campaign finance laws and give public funding to candidates for state office who agree to spending limits?" (See "The First Stone," June 24.)

If Mainers say yes, beginning in 2000 candidates will choose between two campaign financing options: securing private funding on their own, or participating in a new system that gives them public money with certain restrictions.

Those who choose to use private money would see their resources radically curtailed, with individual donor and PAC limits lowered from the current \$5,000 to

\$250 for legislative races and \$500 for statewide races. Candidates who opt for public financing would have their campaigns paid for by the state's "Clean Elections Fund," an arrangement for which they must collect a minimum number—50 for state House candidates and 2,500 for gubernatorial hopefuls—of \$5 "qualifying contributions," which are deposited in the fund. Publicly funded candidates must also agree to forgo private donations.

Polls indicate that Maine voters support the measure by a 2-to-1 margin. But a large contingent is undecided, and it's possible that an organized opposition will surface at the last moment and mount a television blitz. "A number of groups see that this is an issue that puts their power under siege," says David Donnelly, the campaign manager. "The opposition has not yet formed a PAC. But they will collect their checks, line them up and file as a PAC the same day that they make their media buy. They will do what they do best: raise money and spend it on TV."

The Clean Elections coalition effort has found a novel way to spread its message. About 2,500 supporters of public campaign financing have altered their answering machine message to say: "Please leave a message after the beep and I will get back to you, and after that be sure to vote yes on Question 3 in November to give special interests their walking papers."

For the more theatrically inclined, the campaign fields costumed volunteers, complete with tails, ears and \$500 bills falling out of suit pockets. These fat cats walk down the street crying: "We're fat cats of America. We're bipartisan. We buy Democrats. We buy Republicans." A second volunteer follows, pressing leaflets into hands and saying, "Don't listen to that cat. Vote yes on 3."

While reformers in Maine seek to stop monied interests from buying elections, voters in San Francisco will have the chance to choose a voting system that will ensure that the city's minority groups are represented on the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, the legislative council for both the city and the county.

Under the current system, the 11 members of the Board of Supervisors are chosen in at-large elections held every two years in which voters cast five or six ballots, depending on the number of open seats that year. The candidates with the most votes win. Thus, the white, Democratic majority of San Francisco voters can elect all the seats on the board. It wasn't until 1994 that a non-white person, Mabel Teng, won a board seat without having been first appointed by the mayor.

In November 1994, voters passed Proposition L, which set up a task force to study electoral reform. The idea was to return to district elections, long a goal of San Francisco's progressive community. However, the task force found that the only way to provide a district for the city's dispersed African-American community was to gerrymander a district that resembled an oddly shaped propeller, a district the Supreme Court would likely find unconstitutional.

Faced with this predicament, and at the prodding of Steve Hill of the Washington-based Center for Voting and Democracy, the task force began to explore a proportional representation system, known as preference voting, that is currently in use in Cambridge, Mass. Under a preference-voting system, San Francisco voters would rank their candidates from one to six (or five, depending on the year). If a voter's first choice doesn't win, their vote transfers to their second choice, and so on, until there are six candidates who have passed the threshold of victory, which in the case of six candidates would be 15 percent of the vote.

Preference voting has won the approval of voters who use it. Studies indicate that under a preference-voting system, significantly more people feel satisfied that their vote helped elect somebody. No small matter for a country like the United States, where in 1994, 63 percent of eligible voters chose not to vote in elections for the House of Representatives. And of the 37 percent who did vote, only 23 percent saw their vote help elect a member of Congress.

After looking at the options, the San Francisco task force recommended that voters be given two choices: a district system, which is on the November ballot as Proposition G, and preference voting, Proposition H. The option that garners more than 50 percent of the vote wins. If neither captures a majority, the current system will remain in place.

Rich DeLeon, a political science professor at San Francisco State University and the author of *San Francisco: Left Coast City*, served as an adviser to the task force and was instrumental in drawing the proposed districts for Proposition G. But after designing districts and trying to drum up support for the gerrymandered map among outraged com-

munity groups, DeLeon became one of the leading advocates for proportional representation.

DeLeon argues that preference voting "repairs the flaws of the current system." At present, a candidate needs to net about 90,000 votes and to spend about \$250,000 in order to win a seat on the San Francisco Board of Supervisors. But under preference voting, any candidate who attracts about 30,000 votes would be elected. Consequently, since fewer voters would have to be won over, campaigns would become more affordable.

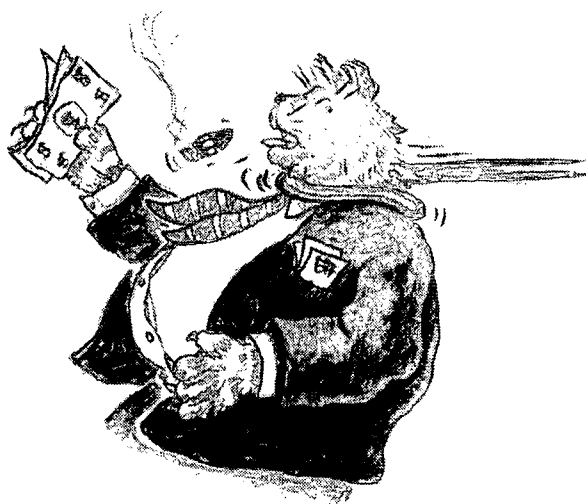
Under a preference system, second, third, fourth and fifth votes can also count. That gives candidates a reason to reach out and appeal to a wider audience. Currently in San Francisco, minority communities often practice "bullet voting," wherein they only vote for their preferred candidate and throw away their other votes, denying them to other candidates. "That racially fixated voting pattern is not conducive to building alliances," says DeLeon. "But once preference voting is installed, candidates will have an incentive to reach out to other constituencies. And that will attract a different field of candidates, the kinds of folks who have broader agendas."

The "coalition building" argument was echoed by Lani Guinier, who has publicly endorsed Proposition H. "In this era of backlash against the Voting Rights Act," she says, "San Francisco has an opportunity to be on the cutting edge of this issue of electoral reform and political representation."

The only public opposition to Proposition H has come from the Chamber of Commerce, which is not, however, mounting a campaign against the measure. And support for Proposition H has taken off, with endorsements coming in from the San Francisco Democratic Central Committee, the Police Officers' Association, the United Farm Workers, the Black Leadership Forum and all major unions.

As Jesse Jackson puts it, Proposition H represents "a voting system that could serve as a model for the next century." "I saw proportional representation at work in the South African elections two years ago, and I was impressed," he said in his formal endorsement statement. "I found it to be an 'inclusive' system, giving everyone in South African society a stake in the outcome, rather than the 'exclusive' system that is too often the result of 'winner-take-all.'"

Maine Voters for Clean Elections can be reached at P.O. Box 7692, Portland, ME 04112, (207) 773-3274. San Franciscans for Preference Voting can be reached through the Center for Voting and Democracy, P.O. Box 60037, Washington, D.C. 20039, (301) 270-4616.



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F O R E I G N P O L I C Y

Torture 101

New revelations about the notorious curriculum of the School of the Americas are one more reason to shut the military academy down.

By Lisa Haugaard

“**T**

he Pentagon revealed what activists opposed to the school have been alleging for years—that foreign military officers were taught to torture and murder to achieve their political objectives,” says Rep. Joseph P. Kennedy II (D-MA), who has waged a three-year campaign to close the U.S. Army School of the Americas (SOA). Hoping to elude media attention, the Pentagon waited until late on a Friday to release training manuals used at the school and distributed throughout Latin America that instructed officers on the use of torture, murder and blackmail in the fight against left-wing opponents.

The most egregious passages in the declassified manuals advocated such tactics as executions of guerrillas, extortion, physical abuse and paying bounties for enemy dead. One of the manuals offers the following techniques to recruit a guerrilla as an intelligence

source: blackmail, false arrest, imprisonment of the potential recruit’s parents and execution of all other members of his guerrilla cell. Another manual contains detailed instructions for making Molotov cocktails.

The Pentagon released the manuals after a sustained public pressure campaign focused on the role of the CIA in Guatemala, which was the subject of a June report by the President’s Intelligence Oversight Board. Since the board’s report mentioned the manuals, the Pentagon received requests to declassify them in their entirety.

The seven Spanish-language training manuals, totaling 1,100 pages, were prepared by the U.S. military and used between 1987 and 1991 for intelligence training courses in Latin America and at the School of the Americas. These manuals, with titles such as “Counter-intelligence” and “Revolutionary War and Communist Ideology,” were based on lesson plans used by SOA instructors since 1982. These lesson plans, in turn, were based in part on older material dating back to the ’60s

from “Project X,” the U.S. Army’s Foreign Intelligence Assistance Program. The U.S. government estimates that as many as a thousand copies of these manuals may have been distributed at the SOA and throughout Latin America.

In late 1991, after the Bush administration “discovered” the use of these manuals, the office of the assistant to the secretary of defense for intelligence oversight launched an investigation. The Pentagon provided the resulting report to congressional intelligence committees in 1992, but it remained sealed from the public until now. The investigation concluded that the manuals’ authors and SOA instructors “erroneously assumed that the manuals, as well as the lesson plans, represented approved doctrine.” When interviewed by the investigators, the manuals’ authors stated that they believed intelligence oversight regulations applied only to U.S. personnel and not to the training of foreign personnel—in other words, that U.S. instructors could teach abusive techniques to foreign militaries that they could not legally perform themselves.

The response to this investigation was limited to damage control. The Bush administration ordered the retrieval and destruction of the manuals, and the U.S. Army Southern Command advised Latin American governments that the handbooks did not represent official U.S. policy. However, the whole episode was treated as an isolated incident. The individuals responsible for writing and teaching the lesson plans and manuals were not disciplined. SOA and other U.S. military instructors were not retrained. And military training programs were not rethought.

Along with the declassified manuals, the Pentagon released two dozen excerpts from the manuals that contain “objectionable and questionable material.” Yet a preliminary

examination of the manuals by Kennedy's office revealed other citations that describe techniques violating human rights. The "Interrogation" manual taught military officers to gag, bind and blindfold suspects, while the "Terrorism and Urban Guerilla" guide explains how to build mail bombs.

Analysts at the National Security Archive, a Washington-based research organization, point to sections of at least two of the manuals that equate democratic, non-violent and even strictly electoral campaigning with terrorist activity. "It is important to note that many terrorists are very well trained in subversion of the democratic process and use the system to advance their causes," one manual states. "This manipulation ends with the destruction of the democratic system. Discontent that can become political violence can have as its cause political, social and economic activities of terrorists operating within the democratic system." Another manual warns that rebels are active in political organizations, legislative initiatives and political education, and that they can "resort to subverting the government by electoral means." This sort of analysis encourages military officers to perceive democratic challenges to a government as threatening and worthy of a military response.

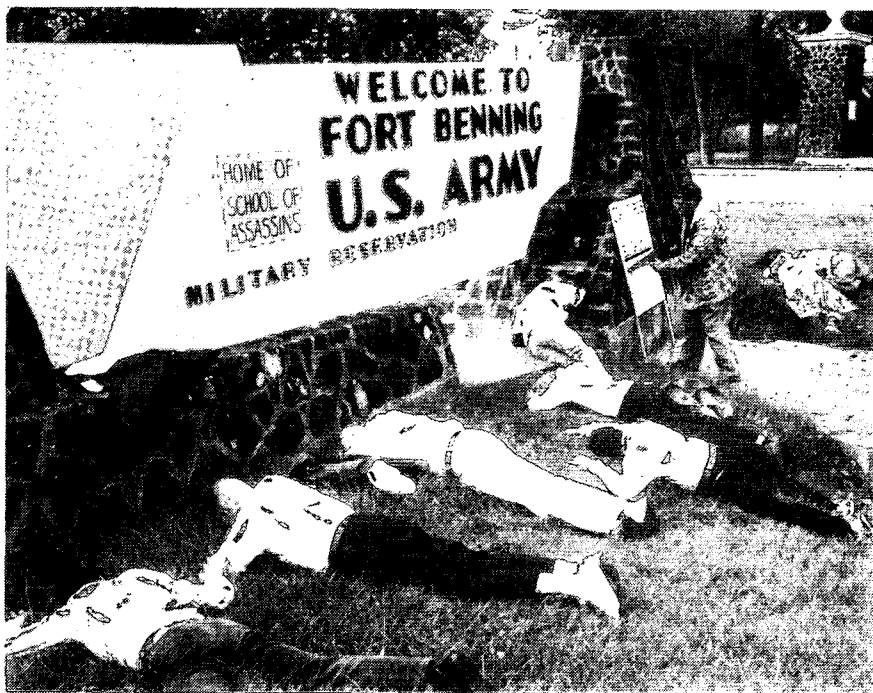
One manual describes '60s activist Tom Hayden, currently a California state senator, as "one of the masters of terrorist planning." It is precisely this identification of activists for social change as terrorists that led death squads in Latin America to kill thousands of religious leaders, students,

union members and human rights activists.

These manuals provide a paper trail to the counterinsurgency techniques taught at the School of the Americas. Since its inception in 1946 in Panama, the school has trained 57,000 Latin American officers and soldiers. (In 1984, under the terms of the Panama Canal treaty, the Pentagon moved the school to Fort Benning, Ga.) While the United States provides military training to soldiers from many other countries, only Latin Americans have a special school where they are trained in their own language.

Despite its stated mission to promote human rights, the school has long had an unsavory reputation in Latin America, where it has been dubbed the "school of the assassins" and the "coup d'état school" for the records of some of its notorious graduates (see sidebar). In the United States, Maryknoll priest Roy Bourgeois initiated a campaign in 1990 to close the school, opening an "SOA Watch" office right outside Fort Benning's gate. The effort to shut the school gathered steam following revelations that year that more than two-thirds of the Salvadoran officers cited for atroci-

Protesters re-enact the Jesuit murders outside the School of the Americas.



© SOA WATCH

The Dishonor Roll

Prominent graduates of the School of the Americas include:

El Salvador: Salvadoran death squad architect Roberto D'Aubuisson; two of the three Salvadoran officers cited by the U.N. Truth Commission for the 1980 assassination of Archbishop Oscar Romero; three of the five officers cited for the 1980 murder of four American nuns; 10 of the 12 officers cited for the 1981 El Mozote massacre; and 19 of the 26 officers cited for the 1989 murders of six Jesuits. During the '80s, Salvadoran military officers were the largest single group at the SOA, making up about one-third of the students.

Guatemala: Gen. Hector Gramajo, former minister of defense, responsible for the deaths and displacement of hundreds of thousands of indigenous Guatemalans; Col. Julio Alpírez, implicated in the torture and deaths of U.S. citizen Michael DeVine and guerrilla leader Efraín Bámaca.

Panama: Gen. Manuel Noriega, Panamanian dictator ousted by President Bush in 1989.

Haiti: Lt. Gen. Raoul Cédras, the man responsible for overthrowing democratically elected President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in 1991.

Honduras: Gen. Luis Alonso Discua, founder of the notorious Battalion 3-16, responsible for numerous disappearances, and at least 18 other ranking officers linked to the battalion.

Peru: The three high-ranking officers convicted in February 1994 of murdering nine university students and a professor at La Cantuta.

Other distinguished alumni: Of the 10 former Latin American heads of state proudly touted in SOA public relations material as SOA graduates, not one was democratically elected.

ties in the U.N. Truth Commission report were SOA graduates.

The school's opponents are not naive. They know that closing the school would not end U.S. training of Latin American militaries and intelligence services, since these activities can and do take place in other settings. Nonetheless, they believe that it would be an important symbolic victory.

In public relations efforts to counter the campaign, SOA officials emphasize the school's role in teaching human rights, democracy and civil-military relations. They point to recent changes in the curriculum that, they say, highlight these subjects. However, the main thrust of the school continues to be combat and intelligence training. The 1996 course catalogue lists courses in battle staff operations, commando operations, intelligence, border operations, artillery, psychological operations and helicopter operation and repair. Counterinsurgency techniques are listed as topics in several courses. Only one of the 32 courses taught at the school focuses on democracy. No separate course on human rights is offered, although a four-hour "mandatory human rights awareness training" session is included in several courses.

Even if human rights violations were not part of the curriculum, critics question the rationale for teaching combat and intelligence skills to Latin American militaries. During the Cold War, they point out, militaries used these skills to thwart democratic opponents of repressive regimes. Today, such skills are obsolete and in fact hinder the concerted struggle by Latin American citizens to assert civilian control over still powerful armies.

The revelations about the manuals give new impetus to efforts to close the school. Kennedy has twice tried to pass legislation that would have closed the school. Both attempts ended in defeat (with votes of 256-174 in October 1993 and 217-157 in May 1994). Supporters of the school maintain that the school's notorious graduates are "just a few bad apples," that it is premature "to throw the baby out with the bath water," and that the SOA exercises a positive influence upon Latin American militaries.

Last year, Kennedy tried a new approach. Seeking to gain the support of those in Congress who believe the United States can exercise a positive influence on Latin American military officers, Kennedy introduced legislation in November that would close the school but open a new U.S. Academy for Democracy and Civil-Military Relations. This

Straight from the horse's mouth

Excerpts from the U.S. military training manuals released by the Pentagon:

"The CI [counterintelligence] agent could cause the arrest of the employee's [i.e., the person recruited to spy for government] parents, imprison the employee or give him a beating as part of the placement plan of said employee in the guerilla organization."

"The employee's value could be increased by means of arrests, executions or pacification, taking care not to expose the employee as the information source."

"Another function of CI agents is recommending CI targets for neutralizing. The CI targets can include personalities, installations, organizations, documents and materials. ... The personality targets prove to be valuable sources of intelligence. Some examples of these targets are governmental officials, political leaders and members of the infrastructure."

"The CI agent must offer presents and compensation for information leading to the arrest, capture or death of guerillas."

"It is essential that internal intelligence agencies obtain information on the political party or parties that support the insurgent movement, on the influence the insurgent has on them, and on the substance of non-violent attacks the insurgents perpetrate against the government."

Excerpts identified by Rep. Kennedy but not included in the Pentagon's release:

"A deserter could be more or less certain that there will be no reprisals against him if all other members of his cell are eliminated by government security forces."

"Once a security agent of the guerilla organization has been identified, he could be forced or induced to abandon his cause without abandoning his position or he could be neutralized."

"The CI agent must consider all the organizations as possible guerilla sympathizers."

school, to be run by the U.S. military with civilian oversight, would offer training solely in democracy, human rights, resource management and civil-military relations. The bill did not receive sufficient co-sponsors to be brought to the floor. In any case, religious and human rights activists who oppose the school were skeptical of this new strategy, doubting that the U.S. military could be trusted to teach democracy and human rights. The recent revelations about the manuals erode that trust even further.

The same month that Kennedy proposed the new academy, police arrested protesters at Fort Benning for trespassing as they re-enacted the 1989 massacre of six Jesuits in El Salvador. This April, 13 were sentenced to jail terms. Ten received two-month jail sentences. Father Bourgeois, who was sentenced to six months, and Vietnam vet Louis De Benedette and Jesuit priest Bill Bichsel, who each received four-month terms, are still behind bars, completing their jail time.

The school's opponents are planning another November vigil at Fort Benning this year. "The uncovering of the torture training manuals leaves no doubt that the instruction was an intentional and methodical part of the curriculum at the School of the Americas," says Carol Richardson, who is running the SOA Watch office while Father Bourgeois is in jail. "This should be the final nail in the coffin to bury the School of the Americas along with its despicable history and practice. Policy-makers should move quickly and decisively to cut SOA funding. Not one more dime of U.S. taxpayer money should go to support the training of terrorists, assassins and torturers."

◀
Lisa Haugaard is legislative coordinator for the Latin America Working Group, a coalition of non-governmental organizations based in Washington, D.C.


C A M P A I G N ' 9 6

Tilting at windmills

***Victor Morales
won the
Democratic
primary with
an upstart
grass-roots
campaign.
A month from
election day,
reality has set
back in.***

By Louis Dubose

Texas Sen. Phil Gramm and his democratic challenger Victor Morales both grew up on public assistance. That's probably the only thing the two men have in common. In Gramm's case, the transfer payments were provided by the U.S. Army, where his father was a career enlisted man, then through a National Defense college fellowship (while three Selective Service student deferments kept him out of the military), and finally at state-supported Texas A&M University, where Gramm was a professor. Morales had a different arrangement.

"I'm someone who was on welfare when I was a kid of 13 or 14, or whenever my dad left," Morales says. "There were no jobs in the small town where we were. And there was not a charity or church that took us in and got us help. And I'm very grateful to the U.S. government, because it helped

us in a time of need." Morales' family got off public assistance when his mother found work cleaning rooms in a hotel in the small south Texas town of Pleasanton, where Morales grew up. (He was born in Racine, Wis.) Morales worked in a grocery store and did seasonal farmwork, picking cotton, tomatoes and squash until he graduated from high school. He enlisted in the Navy and spent several months off the coast of Vietnam, before attending Texas A&I University in Kingsville on a federal stipend provided by the GI Bill.

Morales' surprise victory in the Democratic primary seemed like a fairy tale come true. Ignored by the Democratic establishment, Morales drove his 1992 white Nissan pickup truck from one community to the next, talking with anyone who would listen. The approach worked in the primary. But in his matchup against Sen. Gramm, his campaign—which has logged 80,000 highway miles—is going nowhere. The primary reason is money—or lack of it. With campaign finance reform dead in the water and record

amounts being spent on campaigns this year, races are often determined not by a politician's stand on issues, but by his or her success as a fundraiser. And in the money game, Morales is leagues behind Gramm.

Morales decided to throw his hat in the ring, he says, because he was tired of listening to the two-term Republican senator beat up on minorities and attack affirmative action, welfare and Medicaid. At that point, the Democratic field was nearly empty because Gramm was widely considered unbeatable. Gramm never misses an opportunity to stage a media event when federal funds are being handed out in the state. And as the most aggressive and successful fundraiser in the country, he humiliated an underfunded Democratic challenger six years ago.

"I looked around and nobody was there," Morales says. "And I said, 'why not me?'" So the high school government teacher from a white-bread Republican bedroom community north of Dallas overcame the objections of his wife and told his principal that he intended to run for public office. His only experience in electoral politics had been his successful campaign for city council in Crandall, Texas. ("I suggested that he consider state representative," Poteet High School Principal Lanny Frazier said during an interview in his office.) Then Morales began to campaign on evenings and weekends, driving his Nissan and collecting money in a red plastic gas can to cover his expenses.

Democratic Reps. John Bryant and Jim Chapman and Houston trial lawyer John Odam later joined the race. Conventional wisdom held that Bryant and Chapman would face each other in a runoff to determine who would run against Gramm in November. Instead, Morales and Bryant pulled in the most votes. While he got help from some voters who

confused him with Attorney General Dan Morales (who is not up for re-election this year), Morales did so well primarily because his grass-roots campaign and down-to-earth persona captured the imagination of many Democratic voters.

In the runoff against Bryant, demography was on Morales' side. Ethnic identity politics in this election might suggest as much about the historical exclusion of Mexican-Americans from Texas politics as the racial division over the O.J. Simpson verdict told us about racism in America. Most of the races in the Democratic runoff included at least one Mexican-American candidate who had failed to win a clear majority in an earlier primary race. Because Mexican-American candidates were running, Mexican-American voters went to the polls. For example, more voters turned out in El Paso (population 591,000), where two Mexican-American Democratic candidates were in a close, well-funded race for a congressional seat, than in Dallas and San Antonio, where the combined population is more than 3 million. (Morales won 24,320 of the 39,120 votes cast in El Paso.) In all, 88 percent of the Mexican-Americans voting in the runoff cast their votes for Morales.

Several days after his April upset victory, Morales—who had been unable to get the Democratic Party state headquarters to return his calls—was flying across the state in a private jet with Nebraska Sen. Bob Kerrey. Morales and Kerrey discussed the level of support that the Democratic Senate Campaign Committee, which Kerrey chairs, might provide the campaign. After the senator had returned to Washington, the committee tentatively pledged \$1.3 million to the Morales campaign. Kerrey also arranged a leave of absence for his press aide—a native of Luling, 60 miles east of Morales' hometown—to run the campaign.

For that brief moment in April, Victor Morales was the protagonist in a political rags-to-riches story. "Minh [Minh Huynh, one of his former students who dropped out of junior college to work on the campaign] and I had been sleeping in Motel Sixes. And all of a sudden I was riding in Senator Kerrey's plane," Morales says. Party leaders who had avoided him while Bryant was in the race were calling, and Morales, his wife and his student aide were struggling to schedule interviews with the state and national media. National party leaders were so charmed by Morales' everyman candidacy that they offered him a prime speaking slot at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago.

But the honeymoon was not to last. Like fundamentalist Christians who control Republican primaries but then see their influence decline in general elections, the state's largely Democratic Mexican-American voters owned the runoff but cannot alone swing a general election. (Mexican-Americans represent 25.3 percent of the voting-age population in the state.) By September, Morales' cash-starved campaign was trailing Gramm by as much as 16 points in the polls.

Phil Gramm entered the race with almost \$4 million that he had rolled over from his \$25 million presidential campaign. By contrast, Morales, who refused PAC money, had



Victor Morales on the campaign trail in his pickup truck.

put together a genuine grass-roots funding coalition that by June had raised what is needed to compete in an urban legislative district: \$182,476. Eighty-four percent of his contributors had given him \$100 or less, and 77 percent of his contributions were in amounts lower than \$30. Morales is still waiting for the Democratic Party to deliver the \$1.3 million he thought was in the pipeline in April. But with much less available cash than its Republican counterpart, the Democratic Senate Campaign Committee is only investing in candidates who appear to be in competitive races. Morales no longer looks like a reasonable bet.

In Texas, it's nearly impossible to mount a serious campaign without deep pockets to buy TV advertising. There are 18 to 23 media markets in Texas, depending on which political consultant you talk to. Gramm has combined heavy advertising with a ruthless grab for the jugular. The Senate campaign in Texas began with college-age Gramm surrogates working as a "deadbeat loan squad," questioning Morales at every stop along the campaign trail about his wife's failure to

repay a college loan. Then Gramm made his media buys, leaving Morales to defend himself against claims that he would vote to raise payroll taxes, oppose balancing the federal budget and work for shorter sentences for convicted felons.

With the financial backing of the Democratic Senate Campaign Committee, Morales might have been able to define himself to the public, rather than allow Gramm to define him. Morales supports affirmative action, abortion rights, the right of gays to serve in the military, and the Brady Bill. He opposes the balanced budget amendment, California's Proposition 187 and other measures that would deny social services to legal resident aliens, and reduction in funding for Pell Grants. He has even argued that rather than building prisons, government should be funding social services that would prevent crime. In other words, he is running Texas' most progressive statewide campaign in years. Ann Richards' victory in the 1988 governors' race demonstrates that a progressive message can win adherents among Texas voters. But with no money, Morales has no way to get his message out. He relies on one wire service story and, if he is fortunate, several news features per day.

While lack of funds is causing Morales' star to fade, at times the Democratic challenger himself seems to be advancing the interests of his opponent. His answers to questions are often long and digressive or ambiguous, his determination to discuss the minutiae of certain issues with potential voters often slows down his on-the-ground campaign, and reporters sometimes miss him because they can't get timely scheduling information out of his office.

And most notably, in early September, Morales, whose exposure depends on free media, turned down a debate with Gramm. "The date [September 29] is too early," he said. "I want something closer to the election, when we can really create enthusiasm. Just me and him, no reporters." Gramm's campaign and the editorial pages of the state's dailies jumped on the issue, and for a week Morales found himself tied down by a debate about debates. "I earned the right to negotiate the date, so don't I have a say in it?" Morales said when asked if he made a tactical error by turning down free statewide exposure. "I run this campaign by my gut feelings, and when I ignore them I usually make a bad decision."

It's hard not to draw the conclusion that Morales' quixotic attempt to unseat Gramm has failed. A few diehards, however, have yet to give up hope. "I think this race is a long way from being over," said University of Texas Vice-Provost Ricardo Romo at a Morales fundraiser in Austin. Romo observed that Morales has created unprecedented enthusiasm among the state's Mexican-Americans and that the Mexican-American community doesn't poll well.

Other optimistic observers point out that the 41-41 percent dead heat in the presidential race in Texas may also play to Morales' advantage. But with Clinton and Dole running so close, it's also possible that Morales' candidacy could attract enough Mexican-American voters to the polls

to swing the state over to the president, but not enough other Democrats and undecideds to win himself. Democratic Party state chair Bill White says that by appealing to Latino voters in west Texas, Morales might even have a hand in saving the state Senate for the Democrats. The state Democratic Party, White says, is focused on congressional and state Senate elections, where the party's money is best spent. And the Clinton campaign is flying in and out of congressional districts where Democrats are in close races.

That leaves Morales, who hasn't really made a concerted attempt to connect with other campaigns, out on his own.

At St. Edward's University on September 20, Morales spoke for almost an hour, laying out his position on a balanced budget amendment, the Brady Bill, English-only initiatives and affirmative action (sometime after the turn of the century, Mexican-Americans will be a majority in the state and the Anglo majority might find that they need it, he said).

"If you believe in what I'm doing, don't forget to vote," Morales told the students. "And tell people what I stand for. Remind them that what they see on television are Phil Gramm's advertisements. You get that? Advertisements. You heard what I said. Go tell your friends what I stand for." As they moved on to their midday classes, most of the students seemed to have been won over. But in a stark display of the uphill battle Morales faces in this state of 17 million people, there were only 80 students and two reporters in the lecture hall that day.

Louis Dubose is the editor of *The Texas Observer*.



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PUBLIC HEALTH

Leaden pace

Political considerations obstruct a solution to lead poisoning, America's leading preventable childhood disease.

By Will Nixon

Childhood lead poisoning has been called "the silent disease" because the damage it does to the neurological systems of babies and infants only shows up over time with lower IQs, reading problems, higher dropout rates, delinquent behavior and other traits that some conservatives would be happy to blame on rap music. But at the Montefiore Hospital's "lead-safe" house in the Bronx for families displaced from apartments contaminated with lead dust, the disease hardly seems silent.

David Nieves and Cordell Cleare moved there with their son Jordan last May. Now four, Jordan was poisoned twice by lead in the dilapidated, century-old apartment building in Harlem where the family used to live. Four years ago their apartment sustained water damage, which caused old paint to peel. The boy was poisoned again after unqualified

workmen burned off the paint with blow-torches, leaving clouds of dangerous lead dust. Jordan now holds the control handle for his video game backwards because of dyslexia. He often stammers when he speaks.

Jordan may face a hard future. Megan Charlop, the director of the lead-safe house, has been here long enough to watch children poisoned by lead grow up into teenagers. "They don't do well," she says. "If they're picked up by the police, they can't even articulate an excuse. The officer thinks it's an attitude. He doesn't know the kid has difficulties from lead poisoning."

Lead poisoning remains the most common preventable childhood disease in the United States. Some 1.7 million preschoolers have too much lead in their bodies, according to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), including 250,000 who should receive immediate medical attention. Many kids are never diagnosed. Contrary to the popular impression that lead poisoning is strictly a ghetto

disease, it is "the No. 1 environmental hazard for suburban white children," afflicting 400,000 of them, reports Don Ryan, executive director of the Alliance to End Childhood Lead Poisoning, a Washington-based advocacy group founded in 1990. These children are often poisoned when their parents renovate older houses.

Lead poisoning does strike the urban poor, particularly blacks, in disproportionately high numbers, however. In inner cities, almost 37 percent of black preschoolers suffer lead poisoning, compared to less than 6 percent of white preschoolers across the country. While lead can affect every organ in the body, researchers worry especially about the permanent damage it can do in the developing brains and nervous systems of infants, reducing IQs, causing attention-deficit disorders and impairing motor skills. In one study, University of Pittsburgh researcher Herbert Needleman found that students exposed to lead as preschoolers are seven times more likely to drop out of high school than unaffected teenagers, and are six times as likely to have serious reading problems. Lead poisoning compounds the difficulties inner-city children already face—inadequate schools, violence and families under stress.

The federal government has taken a number of important steps against this epidemic, phasing out leaded gasoline beginning in 1975, banning lead from house paint in 1978, and prohibiting lead-soldered plumbing from public drinking water systems in 1986. Thanks especially to the switch to unleaded fuel, average blood lead levels in the country have fallen by 80 percent since the '70s. But until the '90s, the federal government had failed to address the hazard of old, deteriorating lead paint in 20 million apartments and homes. Lead paint is the principal source of lead poisoning among the urban poor. The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) estimates that 64 million homes

built before 1978 have lead paint, although many of them pose no immediate hazard. In 1991, the CDC calculated that removing lead from homes built before 1950, which have the most lead paint, would cost an average of \$2,225 per house—or an aggregate \$34 billion nationwide. The benefits, however, to potential victims and to society—in the form of higher productivity and reduced medical and special education expenses—could justify the expense. With a concerted effort, the CDC predicted, the United States could eradicate this disease over the next 20 years.

Absent from the CDC's calculations, however, is the politics of poverty and race. Loath to submit to any regulation of lead paint or face liability and cleanup costs, the real estate, banking and insurance industries have lobbied the government much more effectively than those who would benefit from a vigorous government response. Needleman even accuses the pediatrics profession of opposing bold federal policies that would reduce lead poisoning, such as a universal screening program for all children, because doctors can't profit from them. "Most pediatricians who treat the middle class don't believe that lead is a problem," he says. "Almost everything else they do makes more money for them than universally screening children for lead."

The Residential Lead-Based Paint Hazard Reduction Act, known as Title X, enacted by Congress in 1992, illustrates the government's reluctance to make business bear some of the blame and cost. The law called upon HUD to sort through a thicket of conflicting rules and get on with the task of ridding federal housing of lead. Over the past three years, the department has given \$258 million in grants to clean up 30,000 homes, and it has begun deleading its own properties as they are rehabilitated. But the HUD grant program, now budgeted at \$60 million a year, cannot possibly pay for the renovations needed in millions of low-income dwellings. Without more money, these programs aren't likely to make more than a dent. "I've never been able to find a way out of this problem that doesn't include government spending," says Karen Florini of the Environmental Defense Fund. "But in this political climate there is little interest in solving this problem."

On September 6, the latest federal rule took effect, requiring the owners of more than four dwellings built before 1978 to disclose the results of any lead tests done on their property to potential buyers or renters. (The rule, which will extend to all owners of such dwellings on December 6, doesn't force anyone to conduct lead tests or to remove lead hazards.) If the owner hasn't tested the premises, customers may take 10 days to do so—at their own expense. In either case, the owners must hand them a pamphlet on lead from the Environmental Protection Agency. This rule is part of a growing trend of environmental "right

to know" laws that simply require polluters to report information, on the theory that informed consumers will use the power of the marketplace to solve environmental problems more effectively than governmental regulations can.

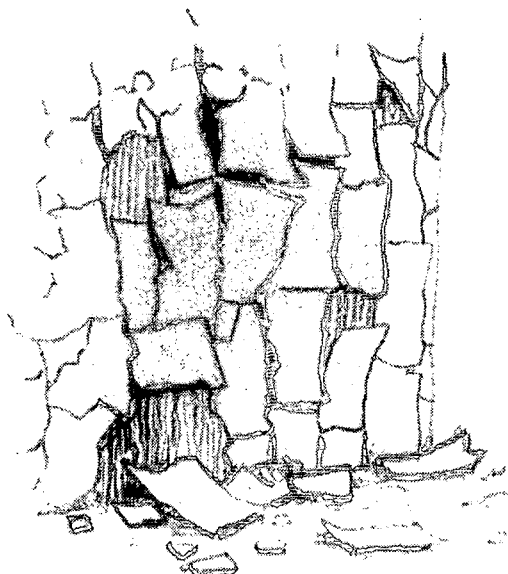
The new rule may have the least impact where help is most needed. In poor neighborhoods, most renters can't afford lead inspections, nor do they have many choices for better apartments. "That's passing the buck," says Cordell Cleare, Jordan's mother. "The burden shouldn't be on me. My landlord is in the property business. That includes maintenance. He's responsible for the roof and plumbing. Why shouldn't lead be treated like that? He should not be allowed to rent or sell something that is not safe." Landlords may even claim in court that warning prospective tenants about lead paint absolves them of responsibility if a tenant's child is subsequently poisoned.

Still, political organizers are sharply divided over how much protection they can realistically push for. These divisions emerged last year, when a task force established by HUD under Title X recommended basic standards for owners to ensure that their property is safe. The 40-member group included anti-lead advocates as well as representatives

from business and federal agencies. One major task was to make sense of the "crazy mishmash" of state and local laws concerning household lead, says Ryan of the Alliance to End Childhood Lead Poisoning, who played a leading role on the task force. In many cases, governments don't respond to housing problems until after children have been poisoned, or they fail to test for lead dust, which poses a much greater hazard than the mere presence of lead paint. At times governments even recommend wrongheaded practices that increase the risk of lead poisoning, such as burning old paint off the walls.

The task force's standards, released in July 1995, fell short of the rigor many anti-lead advocates hoped for. Some accused Ryan and his group of settling for too little. For example, the standards don't require owners to clean lead out of even the most hazardous places in dwellings, such as windows. Even when owners do attempt to remove lead, the standards don't require them to use necessary equipment, such as special vacuum cleaners to remove dangerous dust. Nor do they demand that workers be specially trained or certified. Ultimately, however, these arguments remain in the realm of theory, since the standards carry no legal weight.

Nonetheless, Ryan says, the task force's standards ("lead-



safe," as he puts it) provide a middle ground between advocates of a more stringent "lead-free" policy and the real estate industry. Proponents of the standards argue that 85 percent of the children living in homes with lead paint don't suffer from any poisoning. Conscientious owners, they argue, shouldn't have to pay \$300 for lead risk assessments of problems they know they don't have. And taking a harder line on lead removal could burden the affordable housing market with costs that force owners to raise rents or abandon properties.

Ryan admits that lead-free regulations have proved successful in some cases. Massachusetts, which requires owners to clean up peeling or chipping paint in residences with children under six, has reduced childhood lead poisoning cases by more than half in the past decade. But, Ryan says, the task force feared that adopting a similar policy nationwide would "fuel the fires of discrimination against families with children." Such a policy could be enforced in Massachusetts, he argues, because the state "has a long tradition of fair housing enforcement to cope with that problem" and has grants, tax credits and loan guarantee programs to encourage property owners to get the job done. He says the task force didn't expect the federal government or other states to provide the same sort of support to property owners. Once again the issue came down to money.

"There is some truth in the landlords' argument," says Megan Charlop at the lead-safe house. "Good maintenance, even in a leaded environment, keeps children safe. But maintenance should be the first step, not the final step. The task force should have come up with a long-term plan for delead-ing." The trouble with maintenance is that it isn't permanent. As buildings age, owners change or neighborhoods decline, lead poisoning becomes a problem in homes that once seemed safe. As poverty shifted in the Bronx over the past decade, for example, the lead poisoning epidemic spread from the southern end of the borough to the middle. If real estate owners in the middle had dealt with the lead in their apartments when they had the money, the disease would be declining rather than migrating. "Landlords should have to do more than a whitewash paint job," Charlop says. "They've got to put aluminum slats or plywood on the windowsills, install new energy-efficient windows, and strip down the radiators to remove the lead."

Sitting on Charlop's couch, Sally Santiago is an example of how this policy could help. When she moved into her apartment from a homeless shelter, the place "looked brand new," she says. The owner had sheet-rocked and painted the walls, and installed new windows. But the workers had ignored the obvious lead hazards, such as the windowsills and steam radiators. From the start, Santiago worried about her baby daughter. "She was chewing on the windowsills. You could hear her little teeth," she recalls. She complained for 18 months before being transferred to another apartment in the building. At the age of two, her daughter is only now beginning to say Mom and Dad.

Will Nixon is a freelance writer based in New York.

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MEXICO

They are us, and we are them

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*The
Zapatistas are
immersed in
a sea of
politically
mobilized
peasants
fighting to
defend their
historical
rights to land.*

By Fred Rosen
CHIAPAS, MEXICO

f course, the land was ours in the first place,” says Alberto Demesa, a wiry middle-aged Tzeltal Maya farmer in the northern Chiapas municipality of Chilón. “And before we seized this property, we had absolutely nothing. And no way to get anything—at least not legally. When we lived in the town, we had no water, no land, no electricity, no school and very little work. But mainly we seized this land because we had no other way to get firewood.”

Demesa is a member of a Maya community called La Libertad, a 150-acre peasant commune that lies just off the two-lane highway connecting Chilón with the guerrilla-contested municipality of Ocosingo. A mud driveway, cutting through small fields of corn and beans, runs from the highway to a refurbished barn that functions as a meeting place. Small wood huts line the driveway and the edges of the planted fields. A stream used for washing

and bathing runs just beyond one edge of a cornfield, and beyond the stream are the woods from which the members of La Libertad—mainly the women and girls—gather their daily firewood.

The 22 Tzeltal Maya families who make up the community have no resources except for their land and what it will grow. Two years ago, in the wake of the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) uprising in southeastern Chiapas, they seized this land from a somewhat wealthier Tzeltal who lived in a distant municipality and had left the land idle. Following that takeover, the families created La Libertad, and with the financial and legal help of Chilón’s Catholic mission—which is prepared to reimburse the former owner as soon as he is willing to accept payment—and a group of politically active local residents called Nocturnal Ant, the community is in the process of becoming officially recognized as an “indigenous commune.”

When the EZLN rose up on New Year’s Day, 1994, seizing four municipalities and fighting local authorities and the Mexican army for 12 days, it captured international attention and a good deal of sympathy. The audacity, theatricality and good-natured simplicity of the Zapatistas has kept the rest of Mexico and the world tuned in to their on-again, off-again negotiations with the Mexican government. But another side of the rebellion can be found in tiny communities like La Libertad outside the recognized zone of conflict. Behind the quotable and photogenic Subcommander Marcos and his stream of notable visitors lie hundreds of communities that have nurtured the EZLN. Since the 1994 uprising, the EZLN has, in turn, been nurturing and galvanizing these communities.

Just as the Zapatistas used their uprising as a way to force serious discussions of political, cultural and economic issues with the Mexican government, many Maya communities outside the zone of conflict have resorted to arms—frequently no more high-powered than machetes—to force dialogues over the ownership of small plots of land. Jaime Ramírez, who directs Chilón’s diocese-supported Human Rights Commission (CDH), says that there have been about 50 land seizures in the municipality of Chilón alone in the months following the 1994 uprising. The 36 properties with which the CDH is working contain a total of 15,000 acres and involve about 1,500 formerly landless peasant families. The CDH helps the communities through the arduous legal process of gaining title to the land they have seized, and tries to protect them from official reprisals.

The idea of taking up arms to defend one’s historical rights and then negotiating with the government has deep roots in Mexico. Following the Mexican Revolution of 1910-1917, which adopted the Aztec dictum “the land belongs to those who work it,” and especially following the



A march for peace in San Cristóbal de las Casas, Chiapas in 1994.

energetic land reform of the '30s under President Lázaro Cárdenas, landless peasants felt it was not only their right but their duty to take what was theirs. The revolutionary constitution of 1917 recognized the right of all peasants to a share of communally held *ejido* land, and the specific right of indigenous communities to communal lands of their own. For years, in virtually all parts of the country, peasants have organized themselves into *ejidos*, seized plots of typically unused land, and demanded that the government reimburse the former owners and then grant them the deed to the *ejido*. With the Mexican constitution on their side, the *ejidatarios* frequently got their way.

Peasants have also rallied around the idea of reclaiming Mexico's great fund of not-yet-distributed land, referred to as the *rezago*—the left behind. The *rezago* is the legacy of the inconclusive way in which land reform was carried out after the revolution. Except for the burst of energy during the 1934-1940 Cárdenas presidency, land redistribution has been slow, arbitrary and uneven despite declarations by post-revolutionary governments that every peasant had the right to membership in a landowning community. And nowhere in Mexico has it been slower and more arbitrary than in Chiapas, where local oligarchs have fought redistribution with private armies and captive state governments.

Indigenous activists estimate that about 250,000 acres of idle land remain to be redistributed in Chiapas. While recent neoliberal reforms have redefined much of the *rezago* as simple private property, wherever the amount of undistributed land is perceived to be great—as in the state of Chiapas—so is the potential for violent conflict over its distribution. The Zapatista uprising is embedded in this revolutionary legacy.

The reaction of the landowners to the land issue fits into a tradition that is even older. "The problem in this part of Chiapas," says Ramírez, "is that the mestizos have tried to main-

tain their supremacy over the indigenous people, and they have done that mainly by depriving the indigenous groups of access to the land. Indigenous campesinos whose families once farmed their own land now work for mestizo ranchers for five pesos [less than a dollar] a day."

Not only are the region's powerful landowners and ranchers unwilling to settle the question of landlessness, they have organized paramilitary groups to maintain their dominance throughout the state's indigenous regions. Powerful politicians with roots in the ranching economy have sponsored paramilitary groups. In Chilón, a

paramilitary group affiliated with the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) formed in 1988. Called the Chinchulines (apparently after the nickname of one of its leaders), the group has about 50 members, many of whom are truck and taxi drivers and small merchants in the villages of the municipality.

Last April, after the PRI lost Chilón's municipal elections to an indigenous group affiliated with the opposition Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD), the Chinchulines seized the municipal building and held it for 12 days. When they left, they took everything with them—typewriters, files and furniture. A week later, in the wake of an internal *ejido* election within the municipality that was also won by PRD candidates, Chinchulines reacted violently, assaulting *ejido* members as they left the assembly meeting, and preventing others from leaving. The following day, *ejidatarios* sought out the head of the Chinchulines in the nearby village of Bachajón and beat him to death. In retaliation, the Chinchulines burned 23 houses and a number of cars, coffee warehouses and religious buildings. Then the state government, which is controlled by the PRI, stopped all financial support of the municipality. Chilón's leaders have no funds to do anything. A minor problem with a water pump has left the village without water for over a month.

"Our movement provoked a reaction," says César López Trego, the school principal who heads Nocturnal Ant. "The ranchers hired white guards and formed paramilitary groups to oppose us. I was kidnapped by the Chinchulines. They drove me around for a day and threatened to kill me, but finally let me go with a warning to stop the land seizures. I knew most of them. They are paid by the mestizo ranchers.

Some are Tzeltals, and some are mestizos or Indians who live like mestizos. They live in the little villages of the municipality. With the money they get from the ranchers, they are just a little better off than the rest of us."

The politically active peasants around La Libertad are very careful to say they are not Zapatistas—a distinction understood and respected by all but their most adamant enemies—but they are just as unwavering in their declarations that their communities are "bases of support" for the EZLN. Though not Zapatista combatants, they are armed and ready to defend their rights. The EZLN has made those concrete rights its "ideology," spelling them out in the group's famous 13 demands: shelter, land, health, work, bread, education, information, culture, independence, democracy, justice, liberty and peace.

"The people understand the demands of the EZLN and support them and participate in the struggles for these demands," says Gerardo González, a one-time Mexico City surgeon who now directs the Coordinating Group for Peace (Conpaz), a non-governmental organization dedicated to a negotiated peace in Chiapas. "Look at the 13 points. They are transparent. Even an abstract concept like 'democracy' becomes transparent. In fact, democracy is the key to the struggle. Not parliamentary democracy, but democracy from below, participation and access to institutions. And after democracy, the land."

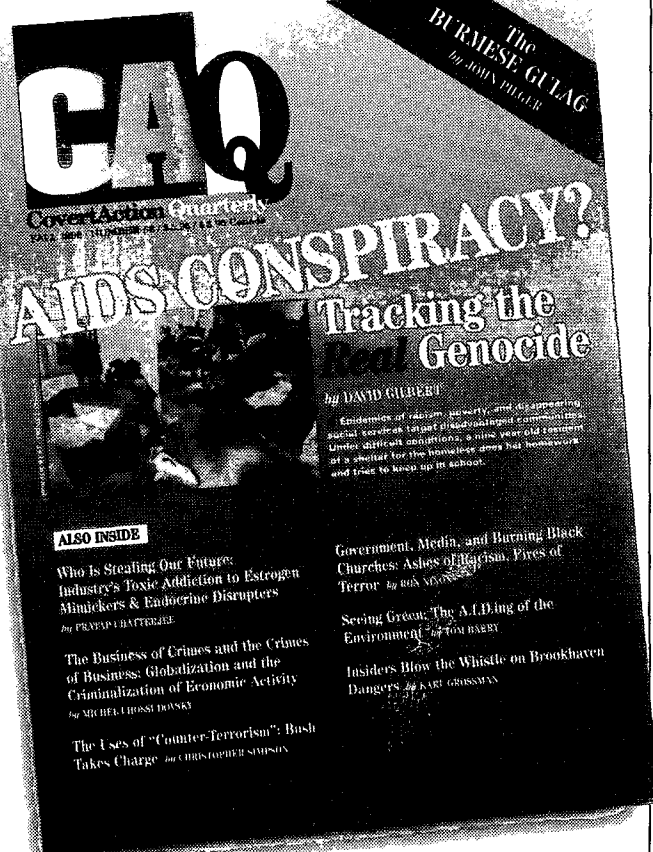
Seizing the land is only a first step. At La Libertad, the group grows all its own food, but it has no money whatsoever. What few sources of employment that existed have now disappeared since the local ranchers won't hire any members who were involved in land takeovers. A feminist non-governmental organization called the Center for Action and Research for Women (CIAM) has arranged for the donation—from Spain—of materials and equipment necessary for the opening of an embroidery workshop that might bring in some money to the commune.

"This is not enough to lift La Libertad out of poverty," said Mercedes Olivera of CIAM at the August ceremony in which the workshop was opened and blessed. "For that we need to do other things. But this is a start." López Trego of Nocturnal Ant chaired the ceremony. "We have learned from the ants," he told those assembled. "Nothing gets done without a round-the-clock struggle. Here at La Libertad, we are all nocturnal ants. And we are optimistic."

Hundreds of small groups like La Libertad and Nocturnal Ant highlight the fact that the Zapatistas, whatever their ideological origins, are now immersed in a sea of politically mobilized peasants, prepared to defend with primitive arms a set of very concrete historical rights. Beyond the international layers of support and protection crafted by the resourceful Marcos, the EZLN has become a force in Mexican politics because it is not simply an armed group, but a people in arms. "We are not in their army," says the Tzeltal farmer Alberto Demesa, "but we know that they are us, and we are them."

Fred Rosen is the editor of *NACLA Report on the Americas*.

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NEW ZEALAND

Kiwi upstarts

A

After a decade of austerity and retrenchment, New Zealand voters are casting about for a political party that represents their interests.

By Emily Schwartz
AUCKLAND, N.Z.

funny thing happened last May when a leading New Zealand banker warned voters that electing Winston Peters as the country's next prime minister could send global money packing. Support soared, both for Peters—a demagogue who wants to slash immigration by wealthy East Asians and foreign investment—and for the right-wing populist party he founded three years ago.

National elections for a new, expanded single-chamber parliament are scheduled for October 12. For the first time they will be held under a “mixed-member proportional” system in which voters will cast ballots both for a local candidate and for a party. Sixty seats will be awarded to the winners of district races, and 55 will be divided proportionately among parties that get more than 5 percent of the vote. Five seats will be reserved for

New Zealand's indigenous Maori people. Previously, all seats were awarded to the majority-winning party district by district, with four reserved for the Maori.

The proportional representation system has shaken up the traditional two-party system, in which the conservative National Party and the Labor Party vied for power. National currently leads in the polls with 40 percent. Labor is running second at 20 percent, while the left-wing Alliance—which two years ago was considered New Zealand's main third-party threat—garners 15 percent. (See “Alliance for progress,” August 7, 1995.) Peters' New Zealand First (NZF) has had a rollercoaster ride, jumping from a mere 4.5 percent last October to 30 percent in late May and then back to 18 percent in late September. The new electoral system makes a coalition government likely. The level of ferment and volatility in New Zealand politics is unprecedented.

Peters' surge in the polls followed a series of speeches in which he attacked New Zealand's open immigration policy and the “flood” of immigrants from Hong Kong, South Korea and Taiwan, many of whom have come “with money in abundance.” These speeches touched a raw nerve among New Zealanders. Although East Asians comprise only about 3.5 percent of the country's population, their numbers have swelled since 1990, when a new immigration policy favoring wealthy newcomers was implemented as part of the free market “reforms” that both the National and Labor parties have pushed through since 1984.

For the past 12 years, the Labor and National parties have taken turns dismantling the welfare state they had built during the previous six decades. Like the leaders of many other countries, they bowed to pressure from the International Monetary Fund and auctioned off state-owned assets, including telecommunications and railroad monopolies, the government printing office, and gas fields and forestry rights on public lands. As Alliance leader Jim Anderton says, they sold off just about “anything that wasn't screwed down,” mostly to foreign buyers.

But while New Zealand's economy has grown at an average annual rate of 4 percent in the past five years, endearing the country to the World Bank and neoliberal economists everywhere, the elimination of capital controls and import duties that sheltered national industry led to a wave of factory closures. During its six-year reign in the '80s, the Labor government also virtually eliminated agricultural subsidies, bankrupting scores of farmers and leaving hired farmhands unemployed. Meanwhile, it cut taxes on the wealthy in half, from 66 percent to 33 percent, began charging university students for tuition for the first time, and reduced subsidies for prescription drugs. After the National Party ousted

Labor in 1990 (by attacking its free-market excesses, ironically), it picked up where Labor left off. Under the old system, most wages and work conditions were set centrally in negotiations between unions and employers' representatives. In 1991, the government enacted the Employment Contracts Act, which effectively bypasses unions by eliminating all forms of collective bargaining.

Not surprisingly, many of the New Zealanders hurt by these free-market reforms began to look around angrily for new political parties. Initially, their anger strengthened the Alliance, a coalition of five small parties, including New Labor, the Greens, the Democrats and the progressive Maori party, Mana Motuhake. The Alliance reached its high point in the polls in August 1994, when it commanded 38 percent. It lost momentum, however, when Jim Anderton temporarily stepped down as its leader—not once but twice, first after a daughter's suicide and again after a son's drug overdose.

As the Alliance faltered, Peters took up the slack with his well-received anti-immigration speeches and populist pandering. A short, powerfully built former rugby player of Maori descent, Peters knows how to entertain crowds. His political humor, delivered with timing reminiscent of Bob Hope, appeals to disgruntled elderly voters who feel cheated by the Labor and National parties, which allowed pensions and other benefits to shrink. NZF also has the support of many of New Zealand's Maori, who comprise 13 percent of the population. Many see Peters as a much-needed role model for Maori youth, who are disproportionately represented in jails and dole queues. Others, however, who object to his white-friendly ideas and inability to speak Maori, call him a "potato"—brown on the outside, white at the core.

In his drive to appeal to all voters, Peters has revealed little about what policies he would implement if elected. He promises lower rents in government-owned housing and more spending on health care, education and pensions, all of which have been cut by the ruling parties. The Alliance, which favors similar increases in social spending, admits that carrying out its proposed regional economic plans would entail higher taxes on wealthy New Zealanders. Peters, by contrast, says he can increase social spending and lower taxes at the same time.

When railing against foreign investment, Peters uses stronger language than the Alliance, which also favors protecting domestic industry. He calls the ruling parties' policy "economic treason, not only against past generations of New Zealanders but against all future generations, who will one day find that the land, in which they will one day be mere tenants, was sold off by ... politicians in the '80s and '90s."

In the upcoming election, New Zealand's voters will get their first real chance to accept or reject the last decade's economic policies, since neither Labor, which initiated the "reforms" in the mid-'80s, nor National, the party that took the transformation fur-

ther in the '90s, ever campaigned on a program of privatization and economic belt-tightening. Alliance National Director Matt McCarten believes that the door to third parties opened up by proportional representation cannot be shut. In the long run, he predicts, NZF will replace National on the right, while the Alliance will replace Labor on the left. If this realignment occurs, it will demonstrate how proportional representation can empower voters to dislodge the established political parties. In New Zealand's case, proportional representation may serve to punish the parties that dismantled the welfare state without an electoral mandate. Alliance leaders, therefore, are now following a long-term strategy: Their goal is to build a base for a larger movement and a more credible challenge in elections to come.

With the election only a few days off, it's still impossible to say who will prevail. The Labor Party expects that voters will shy away from parties that lack experience. The incumbent National Party hopes that voters will reward it for a new round of tax cuts it enacted, which went into effect in July. The Alliance hopes that voters will reconsider Peters' xenophobia and opt for their more reasoned criticism of New Zealand's new economic order. But regardless of who wins on October 12, New Zealand's new electoral system has clearly given voters the ability to challenge the Labor-National duopoly. With luck, that will make New Zealand politicians of all persuasions more accountable to their own people than to the managers of foreign investment portfolios.

Emily Schwartz is a freelance writer based in New York.

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CORPORATE AMERICA

Insuring against insurrection

A debate has erupted in Congress over whether the government has any business underwriting corporate investments overseas.

By J.A. Savage

It's not often that Bernie Sanders and John Kasich agree—especially on government policy toward U.S. corporations. Yet they found themselves on the same side in a debate in Congress this September over a government bank that finances U.S. foreign investment and insures U.S. corporations against nationalization and political insurrection in countries from Paraguay to Kyrgyzstan. "It's an ideological battle where right and left collide around the back," says Ken Maize, a reporter who covers the issue for energy journals.

To many of its critics, the activities of the Overseas Private Investment Corp. (OPIC) are a prime example of "corporate welfare." Furthermore, they argue, insuring investments in developing countries could result in U.S. jobs going overseas. Jesse Jackson Jr., a Chicago Democrat who is a leading mem-

ber of this camp, contends that some investments insured by OPIC should have been made in black areas of inner cities, where unemployment often reaches 50 percent.

Providing living proof of the old adage that "politics makes strange bedfellows," these left-wing members of Congress joined forces with members of the freshman class of Republicans who want to get the government out of the insurance business. The government has no business being "involved in giving huge guarantees to large corporations," says Rep. Kasich, chair of the House Budget Committee. "The risk gets covered by taxpayers." Foreign investments are getting bigger and bigger as many countries privatize state-owned industries and sell them to foreign investors. If a Third World government ever decides to return to an economic model based on nationalizing key industries, members of Congress like Kasich worry that U.S. taxpayers will be left holding the bag.

The issue came to a head on September 11 when the House of Representatives voted down a bill that would have reauthorized OPIC's charter for five years. The legislation, which was defeated by a 260-157 vote, would have allowed the 25-year-old bank to increase its ceiling for insurance from \$13 billion to \$25 billion by 2001, and its corporate financing from \$9.5 billion to \$20 billion. OPIC has grown at a brisk pace under the Clinton administration. Its annual loans grew from \$70 million at the beginning of the Clinton years to \$1 billion today.

The odd alliance in the battle over OPIC reflects how the Clinton administration's drive to promote free trade and global economic integration—led by multinational corporations—has opened up rifts within both major parties. The progressive wing of the Democratic Party bristles at how huge corporations and their Wall Street allies are the principal beneficiaries of Clinton-backed initiatives like NAFTA, GATT and OPIC. These members of Congress are also fearful that low-skilled workers will be left holding the short end of the stick as programs like OPIC encourage corporations to seek out the cheapest, most vulnerable workers in all corners of the globe.

While the Republican Party is considered the party of the wealthy, it must also answer to smaller U.S. businesses. Thus, it makes sense that many Republicans would be skeptical of OPIC's support of huge corporations like AMOCO, Citibank, Bechtel and Caterpillar. Moreover, these Republicans follow a political playbook that says government involvement in the private sector is *prima facie* a bad thing. They conveniently ignore the question of whether private insurers would even be interested in getting involved in the fields where OPIC operates. (The answer is probably no.)

OPIC lends taxpayer money and provides insurance policies, guaranteed by the U.S. Treasury, to U.S. corporations

that have investments in developing nations. The bank's self-proclaimed mandate is twofold: to increase U.S. jobs through the expansion of American business abroad and enhanced global competitiveness, and to encourage export-based economies in developing countries as a way to ease the balance-of-payment difficulties they confront.

In addition to providing financing for projects that the credit markets consider too risky, the bank offers insurance policies for:

- *Political insurrection:* If citizens in a host country sabotage a U.S. corporation's plant or equipment, the U.S. government will pay for the damage.
- *Nationalization:* If a host government takes over a plant and equipment, OPIC will reimburse the corporation.
- *Controlling operations:* If a host government limits operations due to pollution or other poor business practices, OPIC will pay the corporation for any losses.
- *Currency inconvertibility:* If a corporation's output is being sold in the host country and that country's currency is not performing well in international exchange markets, OPIC will cover any losses.

"We protect against outright nationalization or creeping expropriation," says Daniel Riordan, OPIC vice president for insurance. "We don't want investors deprived of the fundamental rights of the project." If a project is in trouble, Riordan says, the bank sends in negotiators to try to "salvage it from the host government" and protect it against politically motivated harmful acts, wars or civil strife, terrorism and sabotage.

The premium for this insurance comes to 3 percent of the coverage for currency inconvertibility, 4 percent for expropriation and 7.5 percent for political violence.

Undercutting the argument of the budget-cutters, the bank has turned a profit for the Treasury every year since it was founded in 1971. According to the bank, it underwrites investments worth \$84 billion, predominantly in capital-intensive industries such as power generation, mining, oil and gas, and financial services. Companies supported by the bank operate in 140 countries. Few countries in which U.S. companies operate are off limits. The bank does not, however, fund investments in Burma, China or Cuba.

In the current showdown in Congress, U.S. corporations with overseas investments are lobbying heavily on OPIC's behalf. Bruce Levy, CEO of the electrical utility GPU International and president of the Electric Generation Association, spearheaded a public campaign to defend the bank. In letters published by the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal* and the *Washington Post*, Levy argued that in 1996 alone "OPIC support contributed to the creation of nearly 20,000 jobs and \$6 billion in exports. The net cost to U.S. taxpayers is nothing. OPIC made money last year, returning almost \$200 million to the U.S. Treasury."

Largely absent from the congressional debate has been any discussion of whether OPIC-backed multinational corporations are helping or hindering the economies of the

developing countries in which they invest. The bank, of course, lauds these corporations as do-gooders par excellence. In its 1995 annual report, OPIC officials called their clients "forward-thinking companies" that "respect the host country's environment and rights of workers" and "help strengthen democracies and encourage peace around the globe."

While it's less clear how American workers are affected by U.S. overseas investment, recipient countries would probably be better off without U.S. government-backed multinationals setting up shop on their doorstep. After all, the opening of developing economies to foreign capital is a key pillar of neoliberal reform packages. These reforms shore up macroeconomic stability while increasing poverty and depriving national governments of the ability to direct the course of economic development.

Bank critics also attack OPIC for its abysmal environmental record. For example, the Global Forestry Management Group, a consortium of Pacific Northwest sawmills, received \$10 million in political risk insurance to log up to 1 million acres of virgin forest in Siberia. Likewise, the Pioneer Group obtained a \$9.3 million loan guarantee and another \$52 million in risk insurance to log another Russian forest in the far east Khabarovsk region. If a pending plan is approved, Pioneer's logging operation could hack down more than 342 square miles of trees.

Yet the debate in Congress rarely touches on these issues. Despite the charges of corporate welfare and fears over U.S. jobs going overseas, the bank's charter will likely be reaffirmed. While a majority in Congress shirked at doubling the bank's size, a good number of those members would not vote to close the bank's doors. The United States lags far behind other developed nations such as France and Japan in promoting its own businesses abroad. For those who support globalization—and a majority in Congress do—OPIC's activities speak to the limits of the free market in providing long-term investments in countries undergoing wrenching neoliberal reforms. Despite Republican and Democratic broadsides, it appears that government will continue to be a key player in the new global economy. ▴

J.A. Savage is a business and environmental reporter based in Oakland, Calif.

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I N T H E A R T S

From Broadway to Hollywood

David Mamet's tale of backstabbing hustlers doesn't translate onto the big screen.

By Linda DeLibero

The opening credit sequence of *American Buffalo* zeroes in on the plump, bejeweled hands of a female poker player, and for a moment audiences familiar with David Mamet's play will be struck by an improbable thought: Has Mamet (who wrote the screenplay) expanded his three-man vehicle to include the off-stage characters? No, it soon emerges, he hasn't, but by 30 minutes into the film you're wishing desperately that he had.

American Buffalo is one of Mamet's most resolutely stagy plays, depending for its drama almost entirely on the nuances of his vitriolic, mannered dialogue and the fine distinctions between the three characters' voices. The plot circles around a heist that never happens—a pretty unpromising premise, but one from which an imaginative and irreverent director might have con-

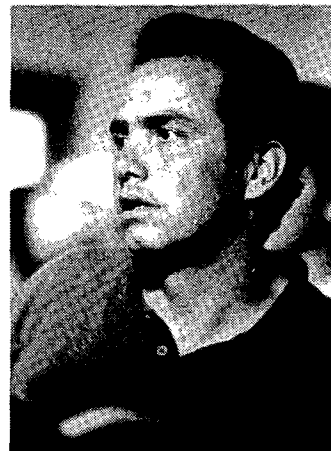
structed a movie with visual dazzle or a richly detailed context. Unfortunately, director Michael Corrente doesn't have the nerve: The meager concessions to film art he makes only underscore the difficulties of translating a theatrical work like this to another medium.

Part of the problem is simply the vastly different expectations we take to movies as opposed to theater. When *American Buffalo* made its Broadway debut in 1977, theater audiences may well have been stunned by the crude vitality of Mamet's lowlife characters. But since their inception, movies have lived off the energy of losers and petty criminals; the shock of peering into the lives of foul-mouthed hustlers doesn't pack the same punch on the screen as it does on stage. In recent years, films like *Goodfellas*, *Reservoir Dogs* and *The Usual Suspects* have mined this territory's chest-beating macho and "fuck you" poetry to near-exhaustion. Mamet's work may have anticipated these dark comedies of male bonding, but the pleasures of his work, if you go for it, are primarily literary. The screen tends to rob his lan-

guage of any subtlety. For example, all the scathing comedy of *Glengarry Glen Ross* was lost in the film version; when that relentless barrage of words comes hurtling at you in close-up for two hours, you lose perspective and hear only the sameness of the dialogue.

Something similar happens here. *American Buffalo* takes place in the resale shop of Donny Dubrow (Dennis Franz), whose young protégé Bobby (Sean Nelson) is about to carry out a robbery under Donny's guidance. Teach Cole (Dustin Hoffman), Donny's longtime poker buddy, discovers the plan and worms his way in on the job by shaking loose the ties of devotion that bind Don to Bobby. Teach ruthlessly pounds away at Donny's notions of loyalty, insinuating his paranoid vision of the world into Donny's consciousness until the very air seems poisoned with greed and treachery.

The role of Teach is an actor's dream, a catalogue of the small-time hustler's rapacity, self-loathing and capacity for self-justification. Teach believes himself to be deeply moral even as he's attempting to con the pants off his friends. Dustin Hoffman, who usually can barely play a role like this without a



American Buffalo
Directed by
Michael Corrente

PHOTOS BY BRIAN HAMILL



Dennis Franz and Dustin Hoffman in
Michael Corrente's *American Buffalo*.

twitching mouth and flailing limbs, performs here with uncharacteristic restraint. His straggly hair and second-hand garb recall a slightly older Ratso Rizzo (Ratso already looked middle-aged), but without the saintliness or the florid self-pity. Still, there's something missing. Hoffman for once is almost too guarded; his understated performance doesn't capture much of the character's humor and pathos. The self-righteous indignation Teach uses to manipulate his victims is meant to be ridiculously transparent, so that when he finally explodes the force of his rage will catch us by surprise. But Hoffman plays Teach solemn and mean from the beginning, foreclosing the possibility of laughter or sympathy; the climactic moment is, consequently, an anti-climax. It doesn't help that Michael Corrente underscores the cadences of Mamet's dialogue (which is already more than rhythmic enough) by cutting away from the actors after each line, making it impossible to really see what Hoffman is doing, much less feel for the character.

You can't help wondering what Al Pacino—who played Teach in several *American Buffalo* revivals during the mid-'80s—would have done with the part. Pacino's face is more expressive than Hoffman's, and he's far more willing—sometimes to his detriment—to let himself look like a buffoon. A clownish Teach would allow us to see that beneath his corrupt maneuverings, he is finally no less a victim than Donny or Bobby, who at least have their friendship for solace.

Teach's skewed philosophy—the individual's right "to embark on any fucking course that he sees fit"—is meant to expose the way the American promise of liberty has been distorted into the ruthless creed of free enterprise. But al-

though Teach uses the logic of acquisitive individualism to justify himself, he didn't invent it. Somehow, *American Buffalo* allows us to forget that; we're merely watching a petty hustler put one over on his pals, and the experience feels uncomfortably like slumming. Viewing the film, listening to the endless verbal riffs, you can't help wondering about the delusional nature of the whole enterprise. It's a bit too cozy watching these sad, seedy creatures from the safety of a darkened theater.

Mamet has said that *American Buffalo* is about the "American ethic of business ... how we excuse all sorts of great and small ethical betrayals called business." But if we regard a loser like Teach as the embodiment of the viciousness of American business, what are we to think about the real thing—say, for example, the studio heads who spend millions to bring a "prestige" vehicle like this to the screen? It's a little like hospital-bed divorcé Newt Gingrich using a pregnant teenager to symbolize the collapse of family values.

Mamet has also claimed that although the play is about thieves, we're meant to see ourselves in their machinations. Fat chance. The film is so proud of its faithfulness to the play, so mired in theatricality, it might as well have been filmed under a proscenium arch. You never lose yourself in the story for a moment, much less identify with its characters. A real filmmaker could have expanded Mamet's vision enough to make us feel that we're all breathing the same fetid air as Donny and Teach. As it is, *American Buffalo* is as sealed off and remote from its audience as a paperweight globe. ◀

IN PRINT

The morning after

By Lawrence Goodwyn

When future historians try to make sense of late 20th-century America, they will confront the long-term impact of "Reaganomics" not only on the economy, but on how Americans talked and thought about the economy. The central emergent fact is that the massive Republican deficits of the '80s created the financial mechanisms for an organic redistribution of income from the working and middle classes to a small and increasingly opulent elite. While politicians and pundits focused on other matters, the Federal Reserve Board attended to the care and feeding of Treasury bonds to float the national debt, ensuring that the tax dollars of the entire society were effectively organized to underwrite the nation's bondholders. The necessities of "the bond market" (understood in a uniquely narrow and partisan way that somehow never became a subject of national debate) took precedence over all other economic considerations and did so structurally—that is, for the long term.

It is important to remember how new this reordering of economic priorities was. For many generations, the basic benchmark of the economy was the nationwide level of employment. Rising employment not only was good for workers but meant an increase in production and in business profits. Participants characterized such pleasant moments in American history as "good times," and rising stock markets routinely seemed to confirm this judgment. In the happy event such trajectories continued for a long period, mild inflation could be expected until an "inevitable downturn" brought a reverse in the domino effect: increasing layoffs, declining demand, reduced profits and a corresponding sag in the Dow. Sustained over time, prolonged high unemployment meant recession or depression—what Americans knew as "hard times."

In all this, there was a commonsense linkage of production in the hinterlands to the well-being of commerce along

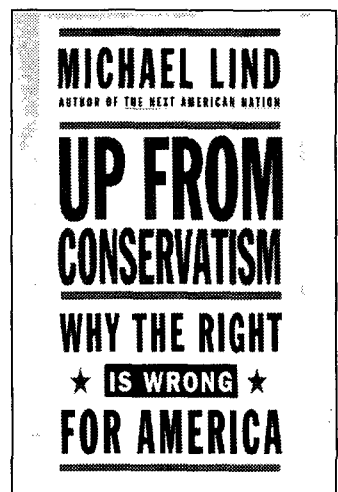
provincial main streets, and a linkage of both to big business and Wall Street. Though economic questions were often the subject of fierce debates, it is important to remember that the debaters shared a common view of what constituted serious evidence about the state of the economy. No one thought high levels of unemployment were a good thing, either for wage earners or for the national well-being. Rather, "full employment" (variously defined) was understood to be a desirable goal of a well-ordered American economy.

But in the era of deficit-inspired income redistribution from wage worker to bondholder, this no longer holds true. Today, news of an economic upsurge capable of rolling back unemployment generates considerable alarm and public handwringing on Wall Street. Business journalists hasten to quote "market analysts" intoning that rising employment will generate "pressure on wages," which will unleash the dreaded specter of inflation. The Fed, therefore, is obliged to raise interest rates to prevent the economy from "overheating." It is eye-opening to discover how the slightest uptick in economic indicators can provoke a cacophony of calls from bond market analysts for precipitate "monetary tightening" by Alan Greenspan. Indeed, the interest rate trigger can sometimes be pulled with such pre-emptory speed that the economy is induced to cool off before it has even warmed up. No matter, the bond market enjoys steady gains as long as wage levels are adequately doused.

In the restructured world that the Reagan presidency has bequeathed to future Americans, low wages are considered a good thing. The other essential feature of the post-conservative state is just as simple: interest rates high enough to entice domestic and foreign funders of the enormous American debt to continue to buy Treasury bonds. Bondholder windfalls can be further embellished by cutting taxes, since any resulting increase in the debt further undergirds the new distribution of income.

The relationship of American capital to American workers has thus undergone a fundamental structural alteration in our time. An essential byproduct is the message that everyone has now had dinned into their consciousness for 15 years or more: Americans need to be taught that they have grown soft on "entitlements" and that the free ride of government handouts is over.

This, then, is the context in which mainstream political discourse takes place.



Up from Conservatism:
Why the Right is Wrong
for America
By Michael Lind
Free Press
295 pp., \$23



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Forty years of Keynesian orthodoxy cemented a consensual politics on both left and right, premised on the assumption that economic growth was sufficient to meet the demands of every class and interest group. In the new zero-sum dispensation, this is no longer the case.

Michael Lind, a young conservative who came to political consciousness just before the Reagan revolution rearranged the nation's politics, was an enthusiastic participant in this political sea change. A one-time disciple of William Buckley of *National Review*, Lind came to know most of the intellectuals who provided the rhetorical cover for Reaganomics. He has watched old-timers like Irving

Kristol and Norman Podhoretz laboring away at their respective typewriters at *The National Interest* and *Commentary*, and he has followed the careers of members of the succeeding generation such as William Bennett and William Kristol.

As its title suggests, *Up from Conservatism* is a heartfelt work of apostasy, one written with verve and humor not always found among the newly estranged. Drawing upon a sizable reserve of indignation, Lind ridicules the country's leading conservative politicians and intellectuals and systematically sets out to undermine their view of the world. Lind's decisive estrangement came in 1993 after he publicly criti-

cized Pat Robertson's "crazy book," *The New World Order*, as a transparent anti-Semitic tract. When Buckley and other conservatives closed ranks with Robertson, Lind broke with them.

In a half-dozen chapters that build on an insider's close observation of organized American conservatism, Lind makes a helpful contribution to the nation's self-understanding as the end of this embattled century approaches. His central theme is that intellectual conservatives have become little more than hired guns who provide public relations for the GOP and the business interests behind it. In the process, they have abandoned any pretense of building an intellectually consistent conservative movement and prepared the way for a politics of racial and religious resentment. "By choosing to appease the far right of Pat Robertson, Patrick Buchanan and the militias," concludes Lind, "the conservative leadership has unwittingly helped an incompatible rival movement replace it." Where he sticks to this level of concrete political narrative, Lind's work enriches an increasingly impoverished mainstream political dialogue.

It is a pity, then, that Lind does not grasp the depth of the transformation of capital markets and labor markets that has taken place under the protective umbrella of Reaganite politics. His alarm over the cynicism and hypocrisy of the "foundation-subsidized conservative intellectuals" is sincere and well-founded, but his inattention to the economic shifts that underlie the new conservatism sharply truncates the range of his commentary.

Having rejected not only the conservative establishment but the conservative worldview as well, Lind is understandably anxious to find a new conceptual prism through which to view history. Abandoning the useful specificity of his evidence, he repeatedly launches into passages of overarching analysis in which he attempts to produce an ideologically integrated account of American politics—from the founders of the republic to the present day. Borrowing from an eclectic array of social scientists, politicians and pundits dating back to Herbert Croly and Disraeli, Lind offers a bewildering assortment of descriptive terms: "one-nation conservatism," "overclass," "rejectionist right" and many, many others. Some of these terms suggest a vague political

tendency unattached to a discernible constituency ("radical center"); others, conversely, suggest a constituency but lack a discernible political trajectory ("white ethnics"); a few smuggle in a regional identity as a substitute for either class or ideology ("midwestern populism"); and some compound all these weaknesses by augmenting one vague ideological descriptor with an equally vague but contradictory one ("conservative populism").

Yet the idea that Lind is trying to get across is not really so difficult. He is what old communitarians might call a "Commonwealthman," one who carries in his head the inclusive notion that the rich, the middling and the poor are all involved in the fate of the republic. Michael Lind is, in short, a kind of democrat. And he is having some difficulty, in contemporary America, finding words to explain to the rest of us the kind of democratic citizen he is and the kind of society he wants to help fashion.

Trying to tease a sense of Lind's anxieties from the book, one comes away suspecting that he is fundamentally alienated from the big acquirers. These capitalists who want their money and to hell with everyone else, along with moralists of the Robertson stamp, are his "far right." Opposite them stand what Lind calls the "New Politics" crowd, an ominous though inadequately sketched political animal that burst forth in 1972 at the Democratic National Convention and proceeded to destroy the remnants of Rooseveltian liberalism. Arrogant, self-righteous, coercive and profoundly unaware of its own elite loyalties and assumptions, the New Politics crowd collectively comprises Lind's "far left."

Because of the unattractiveness of these "far" options, Lind is, perforce, driven to the middle. Unfortunately, he is not much of a "moderate." It is not a word he often uses. It seems there is not enough passion in the middle to console an authentic Commonwealthman. This results in some strained terminology to describe the political categories in which he can find some measure of comfort: a broad tendency he elects to call "the radical center" and a second, somewhat narrower tendency he describes as "vital center liberalism." I confess I have no idea what kind of politics either would represent in 1996.

After the fall of Lenin, liberalism and European social democracy, Michael Lind is an American democrat earnestly looking for a politics he can believe in. It is a calling worthy of respect and I am pleased to publicly record mine. Today in America, Michael Lind has millions of fellow wanderers. Despite the incoherence of its analysis, this book will make you feel better. Michael Lind has not found a way out of our dilemmas, but his authentic indignation is positively bracing. ◀

Lawrence Goodwyn teaches history at Duke University. He is the author of two books on American populism and, most recently, *Breaking the Barrier: The Rise of Solidarnosc in Poland*.

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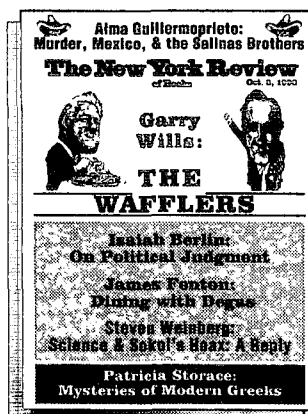
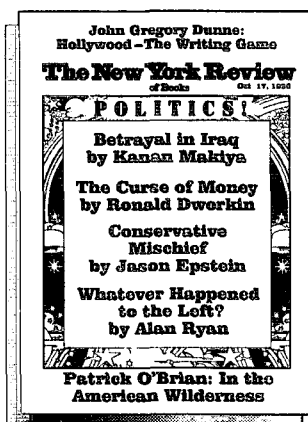
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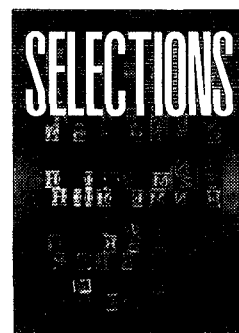
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S P E E D R E A D I N G

Monopoly journalism

By Dustin Beilke

The Chain Gang: One Newspaper versus the Gannett Empire

By Richard McCord
University of Missouri Press
290 pp., \$24.95

At its best, Richard McCord's *The Chain Gang* is a resounding and meticulously documented indictment of Gannett, the newspaper industry, and America's brand of corporate capitalism in general. At its worst, the book is a toothless autobiography that leaves the impression that the world would be a better place if the millionaires who run its oligarchies just weren't so darn mean all the time.

Gannett, the largest newspaper chain in the United States, accrues its enormous profits not by putting out papers that are better or more appealing to readers than those of its competitors, but by assuring that its papers "compete" in markets where they have local monopolies. This usually means buying independent, local papers that already have monopolies, or pleading poverty and entering into bogus joint-operating agreements with independent locals. But at other times it means going into cities where no paper has a monopoly and wiping out whatever competition exists.

Many media companies have followed this strategy, but none as successfully as Gannett. The company, which started in Elmira, N.Y., in 1906, grew by acquiring monopolies throughout the Northeast. In 1967 it went public, offering its shares on the New York Stock Exchange. This put the company in the hands of shareholders and securities analysts, whose first concern was not journalism but the bottom line. Over the next 10 years, Gannett grew from 28 papers in five states to 73 in 28 states, and annual revenues surged from \$185 million to \$558 million. Over the same period, earnings rose from \$15 million to \$69 million, and the price of stock went from \$9.67 to \$38 a share. As it's described in *The Chain Gang*, the company "was from its beginnings a distinctly American institution. Like the country that drove out native inhabitants from coast to coast

behind the motto 'the only good Indian is a dead Indian,' Gannett lived by the principle that the only good market is a dead market—that is, one without competition."

For Richard McCord, the story of Gannett began not in Elmira but in Salem, Ore., where the *Community Press*, a defunct weekly, sued the chain for "anti-competitive practices" in 1978. Gannett's lawyers were able to convince a judge to put a gag order on the case, meaning all documents concerning it were sealed, and all the parties involved were liable to contempt of court charges if they spoke about the case to reporters. Through his own diligence and a law clerk's incompetence, however, McCord was able to see and hand-copy all of the sealed files. McCord, who then edited the *Santa Fe Reporter*, used the information in a long feature story he wrote describing how Gannett executives deliberately plotted the destruction of the Salem weekly in what they called "Operation Demolition."

Years later McCord found himself in Green Bay, Wis., where a small, unionized daily faced an Operation Demolition of its own. Green Bay is one of a small handful of cities in the United States with two competing daily papers: Gannett owns the *Green Bay Press-Gazette*, and a friend of McCord's owns the *Green Bay News-Chronicle*. McCord spent months in Green Bay writing a series of scathing articles about Gannett's activities in Green Bay and other cities. The articles provoked a popular outcry among the city's heavily working-class population and increased the *News-Chronicle's* circulation by more than 10 percent, allowing the paper to avoid near-certain bankruptcy. This story makes up the heart of *The Chain Gang*.

Scattered throughout this interesting and often inspiring tale of a small, struggling paper are innumerable personal asides and vignettes. In a chapter entitled "Whispering Miles," McCord describes what was going through his mind while driving from Santa Fe to Green Bay, and we are treated to a passage that apparently has something to do with a short-lived office romance of his: "Suddenly she was kissing me, kissing me, kissing me. And after one split second of astonishment, I was responding, responding, responding." As in Thomas Geoghegan's *Which Side Are You On?*, another indictment of American capitalism that is larded with self-indulgent autobiographical asides, these passages annoy but don't detract from the importance of the story.

Few readers of *The Chain Gang* are likely to be surprised by McCord's claims about Gannett's malevolence. What is surprising is the strength of his evidence. While many observers assume that these practices are commonplace (though McCord does not seem to be one of them), the sealed court documents McCord uncovers provide a detailed, seldom seen catalogue of corporate dirty tricks. Seeing these methods revealed in all their ugliness should infuriate anyone who is already angry that cities that once had three, four or more independent daily papers now have only one. ◀

Dustin Beilke is a freelance writer based in Madison, Wis.

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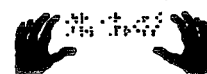
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with him you're never really an employee there. He gives you \$10,000 dollars a year, and then two years after you leave, he calls up and wants to know when you're going to give the money back. In my case, this was right after I made *Roger & Me*. I said, "Well, what money?" He said, "Well, the money I gave you." And I said: "Ralph, that's a salary. I did work during that time. I put out a newsletter for you, in your office, and for that I got money." That's not how he sees it. He's a firm believer in indentured servitude.

Publicly, I don't really say too much about him, because I know too much about him personally, and I think that he's done a lot of good things for the country. He's saved a lot of lives as a result of his work. It's no surprise to me that he's trying to make sure that he spends no more than \$5,000 on this effort, because he'd have to reveal his finances, which would be the very last thing he'd want to do. But I respect people who want to vote for him.

ITT: *Downsize This!* just hit the *San Francisco Chronicle* best-seller list. Doesn't it vaguely worry you that the book is doing so well in the Bay Area? After all, you're not exactly fond of San Francisco.

MM: If you had told me 10 years ago, when I was just lying there depressed in bed, that I would have a best-selling book in San Francisco, I would have said, "Okay, whatever." But my publisher just ordered the third printing of the book.

I think that when [*Mother Jones* editor] Adam Hochschild fired me, that was really supposed to be the last you were going to hear from me. That was their assumption, their reading of it. I was just this guy from Flint, Michigan. I had no political base. I didn't know anybody in the magazine community in New York. I remember about a month after I was fired, coming to New York, meeting with different people, trying to get a job. I could just see I was a pariah. They didn't want to piss *Mother Jones* off. They wanted to get their mailing list, blah, blah, blah. And then I went back to Flint and I realized, I'm in a pretty deep hole here. It just struck me that day that I had to make that movie. I remember the day so clearly. I just thought, Jesus, I've got to do this.

ITT: How did you get so immersed in the O.J. case?

MM: Why do I listen to country music? Why do I still buy lottery tickets?

ITT: You don't think the lottery is a form of regressive taxation?

MM: Yes, of course I do! You know, the whole San Francisco experience made me feel like I shouldn't mention this stuff, but I just decided to stop doing that. This guy asked me, "What are you buying a lottery ticket for? You already won the lottery." I don't know. This is who I *am*. I like playing the lottery.

ITT: Do you think there's any kind of future for the left? Don't you feel kind of demoralized?

MM: No, I don't feel demoralized at all. I don't hang out with those people. I'm doing my gig to wrangle in, not

the lefties, but the average working Joes and Janes out there who are pissed off like we are and have no clue where to turn.

ITT: What do you say to them?

MM: Well, I tell them first of all that the Christian Coalition did an incredible thing, taking over the Republican Party. And they started locally, with school boards and city councils. So you have to organize locally. You know, there are many elections now where there aren't even people running for office—city council, mayor, precinct delegates, all blank. In Flint, the Democratic Party probably doesn't have more than 20 people at their local meetings. So get 20 of your friends, and you'd own the Democratic Party in that county and suddenly take it over. It's as simple as that. It's perfect timing, right now.

ITT: That's pretty much the strategy of the New Party.

MM: Yeah, I like the New Party. I'm doing a couple of benefits for them, and for the Labor Party. I've offered to help the Greens a little, but they're too disorganized, so to hell with them. On this tour, I'm getting people to sign up on these "Mike's Militia" sheets, to have this nationwide base of all these weird, pissed-off people who don't read *The Nation* or *In These Times*.

ITT: How firmly committed to the right do you think are the voters who backed Buchanan in the primaries?

MM: We can appeal to them. Because people voting for Buchanan aren't voting for the Republican dream. They're hurting. Somebody like him comes along, and it's very easy to play to their fear and hatred by blaming the foreigners. And I think that the left just can't see past that. Last night I was up in Burlington, Vermont, standing in a bookstore, and I don't know how many people came up to me and said, "Hey man, you know I hate television. I don't ever watch TV." And I said, "Well, good for you. Congratulations for separating yourselves from the Americans you want to lead. No wonder they hate you. Most working Americans hate you. They agree with you on the issues—every poll shows that they're pro-environment, pro-choice, pro-labor. But they don't want anything to do with you. They'd rather vote for Reagan than be associated with snobs like you. Fuck you, fuck your cappuccino." Go fuck yourselves, basically. Though I didn't put it exactly like that.

ITT: The sad thing is, those are the people who elected Bernie Sanders.

MM: Well, he has reached out beyond them. There was a cross section at the Burlington event last night, farmers and workers. And they were all behind me when one of the tree-huggers shouted out in response to something I was saying, "Well, now watch it now." And I said, "No, you watch it. I want you to watch *Friends*. As despicable as that show is, I want you to know what's being fed into the brains of 200 million Americans so you can fucking talk to them tomorrow at work." And the whole place just erupted into applause.

MICHAEL & ME

Chris Lehmann interviews Michael Moore

Michael Moore careened into the San Francisco offices of Mother Jones, where I had been toiling for a year or so as a fact-checker, in the summer of 1986. Previously the publisher of a Flint, Michigan alternative weekly, The Michigan Voice, Moore plied a cranky blend of investigative journalism and class-minded politics that threatened to bring Mother Jones, then adrift in a dithering swamp of Reagan-era cultural politics, back to a sensibility worthy of its name-sake. It was, of course, not to be. Moore was gone by the fall, abruptly fired in a much-reported—and much-litigated—burst of bad will on all sides.

Moore's ill-starred tenure at Mother Jones taught me some invaluable lessons about the nonprofit publishing world. Perhaps chief among them was never to underestimate the power of the left's cultural condescension. I had sensed this a good while before Moore's arrival, when fellow MJ staffers would greet my critical appraisals of Laurie Anderson and David Byrne with an icy, self-congratulatory silence. But shortly after Moore arrived, I sensed the lines of cultural conflict were about to be drawn much more starkly: He had conducted an impromptu survey, asking who among the staff still smoked pot. Of the 30 or so assembled employees, only Moore and myself had forsworn doobage.

There were lots of other controversies bandied about in the Michael Moore affair. They ranged from his decision to spike a Paul Berman piece on Nicaragua (probably the

clinger) to his managerial style to his decision to publish a column by Flint shoprat Ben Hamper speculating about the soul-numbing appeal of Faces of Death, then the country's top video-rental title. But I always felt that Michael's fate had been sealed by the results of the toking poll.

So it's been no small satisfaction, since the surprise success of Roger & Me in 1989, to see Moore emerge as, of all things, a lefty cultural celebrity. He's now known to millions as the schlumpy impresario who has made the cruelties and absurdities of late capitalism a staple of mass culture, chiefly through the

brilliant, satirical TV Nation, the show he produces with his wife, Kathleen Glynn (now gearing up for its third season). Last month, he published a book, Downsize This!, which is already threatening to become a best-seller.

In These Times: So, who do you intend to vote for?

Michael Moore: That's the No. 1 question I'm getting on this book tour. I'll answer it honestly—as of today, I don't know who I'm going to vote for, or what I'm going to vote for.

ITT: How about Ralph Nader? It occurred to me that that path might be blocked to you because of the problems you had while editing one of his newsletters. Weren't you suing him at one point?

MM: No, Ralph and a lawyer in his office had complained to the New York Times that I didn't have any business making a movie on General Motors. They said that they were the real authorities on GM. What Ralph really wanted from me was money. You see,

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